

COLERIDGE'S POETRY UP TO 1803

GENERAL AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Historical Introduction and Appendix: Bibliography

(1841)

James F. Wilson

John Keats

Ed. in 1841

1. Introduction

History of the Poet and his Poetry

General Introduction

The Poet's Life and his Poetry

Keats's Poet and his Poetry

Keats's Poet and his Poetry

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Keats's Poet and his Poetry

Volume II

The Poet and his Poetry

Keats's Poet and his Poetry

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UTRECHT PUBLICATIONS IN GENERAL AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Utrechtse Publikaties voor Algemene Literatuurwetenschap
(UPAL)

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*Institute of General and Comparative Literature
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Volume 20

H.R. Rookmaaker Jr.

*Towards a Romantic Conception of Nature:
Coleridge's Poetry up to 1803.*

H.R. Rookmaaker Jr.

TOWARDS A
ROMANTIC CONCEPTION OF NATURE:
COLERIDGE'S POETRY UP TO 1803

A Study in the History of Ideas

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY
AMSTERDAM/PHILADELPHIA

1984

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Rookmaaker Jr., H.R.

Towards a romantic conception of nature.

(Utrecht publications in general and comparative literature, ISSN 0167-8175; v. 20)

Bibliography.

Includes indexes.

1. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 1772-1834--Criticism and interpretation. 2. Nature in literature. 3. Philosophy of nature. 4. Romanticism--England.

I. Title. II. Series.

PR4487.N3R66 1984 821'.7 84-24633

ISBN 90-272-2205-3 (hb.)

ISBN 90-272-2215-0 (pb.)

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To the memory of my father

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My warmest thanks are due to Prof. Dr. C. de Deugd for his unceasing support and encouragement as well as for his useful suggestions and tactful criticism. I am also indebted to Dr. S. Varey of the University of Utrecht for his careful reading of the manuscript, and to Prof. Dr. A. Fry of the Free University of Amsterdam for his suggestions. I am grateful to Mark de Klijn for his advice and to librarians and staff of the Provinciale Bibliotheek of Leeuwarden for their cooperation. This study would never have been completed without the encouragement of my relatives and friends, and of my colleagues of the Christelijk Gymnasium of Leeuwarden who have managed to keep up their interest in the progress of my work. I must record a further debt of gratitude to my publishers, Mr and Mrs Benjamins, and their staff for their hospitality while I was working on one of their word processors. Most special thanks are due to my wife who had to put up not only with my almost continual absence from the living room, but also with my frequent absent-mindedness. I dedicate this study to the memory of my father whose ideas and love of learning have always been a source of inspiration to me.

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INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the eighteenth century a gradual but fundamental change of outlook occurred in many European countries, signalling the advent of romanticism. Although the roots of most of the characteristic, romantic attitudes and ideas can be found in the work of earlier writers, M.H.Abrams is justified in asserting that the romantic writers 'in reinterpreting their cultural inheritance, developed new modes of organizing experience, new ways of seeing the outer world, and a new set of relations of the individual to himself, to nature, to history, and to his fellow-men'.¹

It has indeed been argued that romanticism induced, or reflected, such a profound change in man's conception of the very essentials of his existence that it marks the inauguration of the modern age.² One of the main areas of change is that of man's relation and attitude to the external world of nature. It is with this aspect of romanticism as it appears from Coleridge's writings up to 1803 that this study is concerned.

For the sake of historical perspective it may be helpful to attempt some generalizations about the character of this change in man's conception of nature (the word "nature" in this study is generally employed to refer to that aspect of the external world which is not originally made by man). It is inevitable that such generalizations entail a measure of simplification.

The increasing interest in nature apparent in eighteenth century poetry and philosophy in England, coincides with the decline of Christianity as a commonly accepted creed on whose principles human life and society could be patterned, partly because, as B.Willey states, 'the light sprung by faith had become so dimmed by controversy that Nature now seemed to supply the true divine sunshine'.³ Thus nature was endowed with many qualities which in traditional Christianity are associated with the supernatural. Nature was increasingly looked upon as the basis and orientation of human existence, as providing moral tenets and happiness.

For various reasons, this proved too heavy a weight for external reality to carry, as also appears from the fact that in romantic thought the emphasis gradually shifts from nature to man; the eighteenth century reverence of

nature is largely maintained, but the formative, shaping role of man in his encounter with nature is more and more widely accepted, giving rise to the idea that it is up to man, or more specifically the artist, to imbue nature with meaning. As N. Frye asserts, 'For the Augustan, art is posterior to nature because nature is the art of God; for the Romantic, art is prior to nature because God is an artist'.⁴

In the eighteenth century the artist was conceived of as the receiver of the divine light of nature, and nature as a storehouse of truths and imagery for the artist to draw upon, whereas in romanticism nature was regarded as a receptacle into which the artist could pour his feelings and ideas, the artist supplying light and meaning. M.H. Abrams describes this process in aesthetic terms as the change from the predominantly mimetic theories of art of the eighteenth century in which 'the poet's invention and imagination were made thoroughly dependent for their materials ... on the external universe and the literary models the poet had to imitate',⁵ towards an expressive theory which assumes that 'The primary source and subject matter of a poem ... are attributes and actions of the poet's own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's mind'.⁶

This change from the "eighteenth century" conception of nature as an autonomous force of inspiration, to the romantic conception of nature as an extension of the subjective world of the artist, is reflected in the poetry Coleridge wrote before 1803. It is the process of this change that will be analysed in detail in this study. While the development of Wordsworth's attitude to nature has received abundant critical attention, Coleridge's has been relatively neglected. Usually his interest in nature is treated as subsidiary to other concerns whether of a biographical, political, moral, or religious character.⁷

I hope to suggest that Coleridge's attitude to nature merits detailed analysis in that it may contribute to a more balanced understanding of his poetry and development, and of his place and role in the emergence of romanticism in England. More specifically, I expect to shed light on some obscure passages of 'The Ancient Mariner' by proposing an interpretation from a somewhat different perspective than the predominantly moral terms in which it is usually analysed, at the same time indicating a possible solution to the problem of its apparent incompatibility with poems written contemporaneously, notably 'Frost at Midnight'. Besides, this study argues for a more central position in the Coleridge canon of a poem hitherto neglected,

'The Picture', not only because it may be regarded as a poetic reaction to Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence', but also because it is one of the most outstanding examples of romantic irony in English poetry. This study may also help in determining the extent of Coleridge's indebtedness to continental thought, especially during the first years after his journey to Germany. Finally, it will propose an explanation of the sudden decline in Coleridge's poetic output after 1802.

As will have appeared from the preceding remarks, the object of this study is not exclusively literary critical: it endeavours to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the development of Coleridge's attitude to nature. However, since he wrote very little by way of theory during the period in question, and, more importantly, since in nature poetry the poet can hardly fail to establish and articulate his attitude to nature, at least as he experiences it, this study will mainly concentrate on his poetry, while information from his letters and notebooks is used to elucidate his position wherever necessary.⁸ It may be noted in passing that in Chapter VIII, covering the period between 1799 and 1801, the description of Coleridge's views is based almost solely on his letters and notebooks for the simple reason that during this period he wrote hardly any poetry dealing with nature.

The best way to indicate the general character of this study is to describe it as "a study in the history of ideas", broadly along lines suggested by A.O. Lovejoy and N. Frye. If in romanticism there may be recognized, as Frye claims, 'a profound change, not primarily in belief, but in the spatial projection of reality',⁹ it is the purpose of this study to offer a detailed description of the process of this change in man's conception of external reality, as it emerges from Coleridge's early writings. Obviously, a study of this change cannot avoid considering its philosophical background and implications, primarily in the area of epistemology, also because Coleridge repeatedly refers to philosophical sources to vindicate his views.

It is clear that a study which on the one hand deals with a problem in the history of ideas, that of the relation between man and nature, and on the other hand, must draw on poetry as its main source of information, stands in danger of treating poetry as 'substitute philosophy',¹⁰ of reading specific, philosophical concepts into the poetry concerned. Consequently, some rather rigid restrictions have been imposed on the method employed in this study, which will now be discussed in some detail.

R. Wellek has enumerated four areas in which studies of the early Coleridge have proved to be vulnerable. In order to define the methodological

strategy of this study, I propose to consider each of these in turn. His first objection to studies of this kind is that 'They often assume what would need proof: that Coleridge in these early years had definite philosophical allegiances and that one can, in the texts preserved, distinguish clearly between Platonism, Neoplatonism, and even the Hartleian "materialism" capped by theology'.¹¹ Wellek here raises the question whether it is possible to determine the philosophical background or sources of Coleridge's position and, if so, what significance should be attached to such sources.

Since a preoccupation with sources is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of much Coleridge criticism, it is relevant to consider this issue in detail. A few examples will illustrate Wellek's statement. Coleridge was in the habit of making rather sweeping claims in the area of philosophy, such as 'I do not particularly admire Rosseau — Bishop Taylor, Old Baxter, David Hartley & the Bishop of Cloyne [i.e. Berkeley] are *my men*'.¹² The question to be asked is what can be deduced from such a statement concerning what Coleridge himself thought, also in view of the rather curious amalgam of allegiances he is claiming in this and other statements. Since even if one accepts that Hartley played an important formative role in his thought of a particular period, it remains uncertain how much of Hartley's work he actually knew, how much he understood — and in what way — and what precisely he adopted.

But the problem is even more complicated. In his poetry Coleridge often introduced metaphysical reflections and such passages have given rise to extensive discussions and debates concerning the precedence of one supposed, philosophical source over another. Generally, such discussions illuminate little, but rather tend to confuse.

A somewhat elaborate example may demonstrate this. In 'The Destiny of Nations' the following lines are found,

But Properties are God: the naked mass
(If mass there be, fantastic guess or ghost)
Acts only by its inactivity.

Although vague, these lines are not altogether meaningless. Coleridge affirms that matter in itself is passive, that the life with which matter is endowed somehow originates in the divine, and finally he seems to entertain doubts concerning the objective existence of matter — these doubts he expresses rather curiously by means of a pun: whether matter exists is a 'fantastic guess'; if it does not, all is spirit, or 'ghost', and matter consequently

an illusion, or "fantastic ghost". Whether poetry is a medium appropriate to the expression of such speculations is not at issue here. What I wish to argue is that any attempt on the critic's part to specify, or enlarge on, Coleridge's position beyond what he himself explicitly states by referring to a supposed source is likely to prove misleading. Firstly, because the determination of a source is a hazardous undertaking since it partly depends on the preference and range of knowledge of a particular critic, and, secondly, because one can never be certain that Coleridge adopted more ideas from this alleged source than the ones expressed in his own statement.

It has been maintained that the passage cited reflects one of Priestley's basic ideas: 'Priestley argued ... that what was called matter was energy — that this inert matter or mass which could only be known by its properties did not exist, and that what was taken for solidity was, in fact, power of resistance'. This energy Priestley took to be divine, so that 'Matter is, by this means, resolved into nothing but the divine agency exerted according to certain rules'.¹³ If nothing more is inferred from this than that Coleridge's ideas show some resemblance to Priestley's here, this is a perfectly valid conclusion. But if one concludes that what Coleridge "really" wished to express was the more technical and detailed position of Priestley's, and that at the time he wrote these lines Coleridge was thus a follower of Priestley's philosophy, one starts reading ideas into the passage which are simply not there.

How easily source studies may give rise to erroneous, or one-sided conclusions is suggested by the fact that Priestley is by no means the only eligible source of these lines. At the risk of over-elaborating this point, I wish to show that at least as strong a case could be made for the ideational influence of Berkeley and Cudworth, two other philosophers Coleridge was certainly acquainted with.

The inactivity of matter is one of the central tenets of Berkeley's *Siris*, in which he argues that natural phenomena are 'passive without anything active, fluent and changing without anything permanent in them',¹⁴ since 'all agents are incorporeal'.¹⁵ On the basis of these assumptions Berkeley concludes that 'We cannot make even one single step in accounting for the phenomena without admitting the immediate presence and immediate action of an incorporeal Agent, who connects, moves, and disposes all things according to such rules, and for such purposes, as seem good to Him'.¹⁶ If one combines this with his well-known immaterialism, one could infer from Coleridge's lines a tentative adoption of a Berkeleyan position.

Again, in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, the Cambridge Platonist Cudworth develops his concept of 'plastick nature'. He believes that since matter 'is not able so much as to Move it self', there must be a principle of life inherent in nature which 'since it is a Life, it must needs be Incorporeal, all Life being such'.¹⁷ This principle of life, this 'plastick nature', he regards as an 'Effulgency or Eradiation' of the divine Mind, although one of a very low order.¹⁸

From this review of possible sources it appears that Coleridge's lines could be construed as an instance of necessitarian materialism, Berkeleyan idealism, or seventeenth century Neoplatonism. If only for this reason, it is questionable whether this exposition of their possible sources has led to a greater understanding of the lines under discussion.

Of course, for an understanding of the different stages of Coleridge's development, it is desirable, if not indispensable, to have a general knowledge of the ideational background of his position, but it is ultimately from his own writings, and only from them, that his views must be inferred.

From this rather lengthy discussion two methodological restrictions to be imposed on the use of background material can be deduced. Firstly, one can only regard those writers as possible sources of whom it is certain that Coleridge had read them, and those only if repeated and significant ideational resemblances occur. Secondly, one cannot infer from an alleged source anything beyond what is revealed by a study of Coleridge's own statements: it should not add to them, only illuminate them.

A more fundamental issue in this same area is raised by Wellek's second reservation, 'Nor am I convinced that Coleridge's poetry and individual lines and expressions can be taken as evidence of philosophical beliefs'. That 'individual lines and expressions' are too uncertain a foundation to build upon, and that a line should never be lifted out of its poetic context, is self-evident. The issue at stake is the more general and intricate one of the relation between poetry and philosophy.

Clearly, poetic language is essentially different from philosophical discourse and is hardly a medium suitable for the fine distinctions and lucid, rational expositions required in philosophy. Just as clearly, however, poetry is often concerned with the same questions as philosophy and, as in the lines from 'The Destiny of Nations' quoted above, is sometimes couched in the abstract terminology of philosophy.¹⁹ Again, whether one approves of such poetry is beside the point.

Coleridge, in fact, favoured the inclusion of philosophical material in

poetry, as appears from his remark to John Thelwall, 'But why so violent against *metaphysics* in poetry? Is not Akenside's a metaphysical poem? Perhaps you do not like Akenside — well — *but I do* — & so do a great many others — Why pass an act of *Uniformity* against Poets?',²⁰ or from his famous dictum that 'No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher'.²¹ Thus Coleridge did not consider poetry and philosophy as incompatible and incorporated the fruits of his metaphysical speculations in his poetry. Consequently, one can only do full justice to his poetry if one takes these philosophical elements into account. It is on this assumption that this study is based.

At the same time poetry should, of course, be treated as poetry and not as philosophical discourse. Coleridge, like Wordsworth, regarded poetry as the meeting place of thought and feeling. As Wordsworth asserted, its object is truth 'carried alive into the heart by passion',²² or as can be inferred from the conjunction of 'Heart & Intellect' in Coleridge's statement about nature poetry, 'A Poet's *Heart & Intellect* should be *combined, intimately combined & unified*, with the great appearances in Nature'.²³ Thus Coleridge did not conceive of poetry as expressing abstract thought, but rather as "felt thought", or, perhaps, "philosophy as experienced in life".

Consequently, an approach which concentrated solely on the passages of philosophical significance would be as partial and one-sided as one which neglected these aspects of his poetry. In view of this, I will present, wherever possible, a comprehensive analysis of a poem, also in order to minimize the danger of selecting only those passages which I regard as significant, and thus produce a study which, in I.A. Richards' words, tells "us less about Coleridge than about its author".²⁴

Wellek's third reservation contains a warning against a methodological misconception often encountered in Coleridge studies, 'Besides, the problem is made difficult by Coleridge's later attempts to claim amazing precocity and at the same time to minimize his concern for what later seemed to him aberrant or heretical ideas'. As is well-known, Coleridge described his intellectual development in the *Biographia Literaria* and it is on this account that many studies of his early years are based. Yet, as G.N.G. Orsini contends, 'Coleridge in his later years was fond of projecting into the past his mature convictions and attributing to his early youth his later accomplishments'.²⁵ As will also emerge from the evidence presented in this study, his later statements about his own development are often misleading and should therefore be treated with great caution in studies of his early years. Considerations

of chronology, which will be discussed later in this introduction, confirm the necessity of this rather rigorous restriction.

Coleridge's account in the *Biographia Literaria* is only one instance of a more general tendency in his statements about himself, to which Fruman refers as his '*Wunderkind* compulsion'.²⁶ There are three areas in which Coleridge made — consciously or not — largely unfounded claims. The first two are of relatively minor significance to this study. Firstly, he sometimes asserted that a poem was written in some sort of uninhibited outpouring of inspiration, whereas in reality the conception of the poem had demanded a sustained effort extending over a much longer period of time.²⁷ Secondly, as E. Schneider puts it, 'His general habit was to assign a date too early, sometimes by many years' to his poems.²⁸ Since the dates of composition of his major poems, with the notable exception of 'Kubla Khan',²⁹ have been established with sufficient precision, Coleridge's statements in this connection do not inordinately complicate the study of his development.

A serious problem, however, is posed by Coleridge's repeated claims to vast reading which, if taken at their face value, justify such remarks as 'It is never safe to assume that Coleridge had not read anything published before the year of his death',³⁰ or 'It can seriously be argued that no Englishman of his time read more widely and at the same time more tenaciously in so many different fields of learning than had Coleridge by the time he was thirty'.³¹ These rather extravagant statements are due not only to Coleridge's own remarks, but also to the great influence G.L. Lowes' fascinating study *The Road to Xanadu* exerted on subsequent Coleridge criticism.

Lowes' study aims at establishing the sources of 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan' on the basis of the assumption that 'We have to do ... with one of the most extraordinary memories of which there is record, stored with the spoils of an omnivorous reading, and endowed into the bargain with an almost uncanny power of association'.³² In this study the reader is confronted with such a veritable shower of obscure books and journals that one cannot help wondering, with due respect, whether these qualifications are not more readily applicable to Lowes than to Coleridge. In any case, this study has had the unfortunate effect that much subsequent Coleridge criticism is characterized by discussions of virtually unknown books and quaint lore which seem often only vaguely connected with his work.

From such studies one tends to derive the impression that Coleridge's poetry is a curious compilation of ideas and images he encountered during his abstruse research. As R.H. Fogle notes, Lowes 'has opened so wide a

field for speculation that scholars are still inclined rather to revise or enlarge his conclusions than to proceed to the task of the critic'.³³ In spite of Coleridge's and Lowes' claims, however, it should be recognized that it is not at all certain what and how much Coleridge read in these early years beyond the sixty odd volumes he borrowed from Bristol Library between 1795 and 1798.³⁴ And even of these, there is no knowing to what extent he studied them thoroughly.

Even information provided by trustworthy friends should be treated with some scepticism. Coleridge's intimate knowledge of Neoplatonic writing at a very early age is, for instance, often inferred from Lamb's recollection, written in 1820, that in the late 1780's Coleridge recited 'the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus'³⁵ in the cloisters of Christ's Hospital. Yet, as Orsini has argued, it was probably Coleridge himself who had furnished Lamb with this information.³⁶

The assumption of an omnivorous reading, combined with the injudicious use of conjectural source material discussed above, has had a pernicious influence on Coleridge criticism. These observations afford an additional reason for my policy in this study to refer only to those intellectual sources with which Coleridge was certainly familiar.

Finally, Wellek's fourth objection: 'Nor can the chronology of these presumed allegiances be made so neat as to distinguish sharply between different periods and subperiods'. As has already been noted, I do not consider the problems concerning the chronological data of Coleridge's work as insurmountable. Of course, someone's development is usually a very gradual process and does not go by fits and starts, which means that a division of someone's life into clear-cut periods can generally only be accomplished by a certain degree of imposing on the available evidence. No clearly defined periods will emerge from this study, but there is sufficient information to arrive at an understanding of a general development. Matters of detail concerning chronology will be discussed wherever necessary in the course of this study, usually in notes.

But there is a more fundamental issue in connection with chronology that must be considered here. Partly because Coleridge was in the habit of projecting his later thought backwards into the past, the "organic unity" of his ideas has become an almost generally accepted tenet. O. Barfield asserts it unequivocally, 'My own opinion is that the development was so consistent or, if it is preferred, "organic", that later views are for the most part implicit in the earlier'.³⁷ As a conclusion after a detailed analysis of Coleridge's

development, this would, perhaps, be acceptable — although I would seriously disagree if this statement were extended to include the period before, say, 1801 — but it usually figures as a more or less tacit presupposition which is thought to justify the practice of “explaining” an early text by referring to a comment sometimes made more than twenty years later.³⁸ Obviously, such “explanations”, in turn, strengthen the critic in his conviction of organic unity.

This disparagement of chronology has resulted in a conspicuous lack of consensus among critics about the very essentials of Coleridge's position. If one neglects chronology, one can describe him as essentially a Platonist, a Neoplatonist, a disciple of Kant, a Schellingian idealist, a more or less orthodox Christian in the Anglican tradition, or a precursor of existentialism, depending on the stage of his development one chooses to regard as most important.

In the area on which this study concentrates, much confusion has arisen from the unfounded assumption, passed on from one critic to the other, that the ‘one Life’ idea, which Coleridge did not develop until 1801 at the very earliest, can simply be applied to the poems he wrote before 1800. In most interpretations of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ (1797,8), for instance, the ‘one Life’ concept plays a prominent but misleading role.

J.A.Appleyard is too rare an exception when he affirms ‘that a chronological study of Coleridge's thought ... is essential if one is to see his theory of literature in its true dimensions and to realize how incomplete our common notions of his philosophical and literary ideas are when they have been formed exclusively by the study of the *Biographia Literaria*’.³⁹ In line with this, this study will be strictly chronological, which means that Coleridge's poems — and where necessary their original versions — and other writings will be discussed in their chronological order and that I have consistently refrained from referring to later statements with the object of “elucidating” the material under discussion.

Two tendencies in Coleridge studies can be recognized, both having their roots in nineteenth century criticism. For the sake of clarity, I will define them by describing the views of their more extreme representatives. On the one hand there are critics who regard Coleridge as a genius who because of his unequalled knowledge and profundity of thought can scarcely be encompassed and understood within the limits of ordinary humanity. On the other hand, there are critics who, by way of reaction, tend to belittle his significance and emphasize his indebtedness to Wordsworth in poetry and to continental thought in philosophy. The former accept most of Coleridge's

claims of learning and originality and lightly dismiss the many plagiarisms that overshadow so much of his later work, while the latter tend to become moralistic in their condemnation and to minimize his importance also in the areas in which he was great. Of course, both critical tendencies have their more balanced, scholarly, sane representatives.

This study attempts to steer a middle course between these two tendencies. It suggests that his major poetry deservedly holds a central position in the history of English literature and that the tenacity and intellectual honesty with which he confronted the basic questions of human existence reveal the workings of a great and independent mind, even though these questions at times baffled him and he did not always arrive at a clear and consistent answer to them. The study of his changing attitude towards nature indicates that he was not satisfied with easy answers, that he tested philosophical positions on their validity by attempting to find out whether they "worked" in the every day practice of his life, and that he was prepared to go to the limits of his powers in his attempt to reach a true understanding of the external world, its existence and significance to man. In spite of this, he was incapable of finding a solution which could satisfy him both in theory and practice. Indeed, his despairing of ever reaching such a solution may be regarded as a major reason for the decline of his poetic output after 1802. This study, then, records the struggle of a great man with a problem that is ultimately too elusive and intricate for any man to settle or solve definitively, but the way he struggled cannot but fill one with admiration.

CHAPTER I

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TRADITION OF NATURE POETRY

No man works in a vacuum; the work of every artist is to some extent influenced, even determined by the work of his predecessors and contemporaries. When in the last decade of the eighteenth century Coleridge started writing poetry about nature and man's relation to it, a whole tradition of nature poetry had been established through the work of such poets as Thomson and Cowper. It is not surprising that Coleridge's treatment of nature in his early poetry evinces a rather uncritical adoption of the characteristic assumptions and conventions of this tradition.

Although it is an exaggeration to affirm that Coleridge 'never ceased to be a late eighteenth-century poet, though his major poems and his association with Wordsworth have encouraged us to regard him as primarily a Romantic',¹ it is certainly true that his attitude to nature up to at least 1797 reflects many of the stock associations of the eighteenth century tradition. Consequently, it is inevitable that this study should begin with an attempt to describe and define the broad outlines of this tradition in order to gain an insight into the literary background of Coleridge's earliest poetry.

Since Thomson is usually regarded as the first important eighteenth century nature poet and as a model for many of his successors, the general features of the tradition will be cursorily defined on the basis of his work. In a passage from 'Spring' he is concerned with the question to what agency the force that animates nature should be attributed, and his answer reflects many of the attitudes and ideas prevalent in the eighteenth century,²

Inspiring God! who boundless Spirit all,
And unremitting energy, pervades,
Adjusts, sustains, and agitates the whole.
He ceaseless works *alone*; and yet *alone*
Seems not to work: with such perfection fram'd
Is this complex stupendous scheme of things.
But, tho' conceal'd, to ev'ry purer eye
Th' informing Author in his works appears:
Chief, lovely Spring, in thee, and thy soft scenes,

The SMILING GOD is seen; while water, earth,
 And air attest his bounty; which exalts
 The brute creation to this finer thought,
 And annual melts their undesigning hearts
 Profusely thus in tenderness and joy.

The idea of God's continuous, sustaining presence in nature is central in these lines. Nature is regarded as the place where God reveals himself and man may apprehend and experience the divine, life-giving forces.

Nevertheless, the precise relation of God to nature remains somewhat ill-defined and elusive; in the first lines God is equated with an 'unremitting Energy' pervading nature, a conception which by its emphasis on divine immanence could imply a tendency towards pantheism, while later God is referred to as 'Th' informing Author' who reveals himself in his creation, indicating a belief in the transcendence of God, the Creator.³ Although this vagueness as to the precise character of God and his relation to nature is somewhat unsatisfactory, it would be injudicious to play immanence off against transcendence here, or to place too much emphasis on the possibly pantheistic tendencies implicit in eighteenth century nature poetry. After all, immanence and transcendence are not mutually exclusive in theory and, moreover, once the attention is concentrated on the man—nature relation, as is inevitably the case in nature poetry, it is clear that while God may also be considered as transcendent, the main emphasis will fall on his immanence since it is to this that nature owes its special significance.

On the close, even if loosely defined, connection between nature and God many eighteenth century stock ideas regarding nature's influence on man are based. In nature man encounters a divine force resulting in 'tenderness and joy', sometimes intensified to a sublime feeling of rapture and enthusiasm when 'We feel the present DEITY' in nature.⁴ Also, nature, 'reason's purer ray',⁵ 'exalts/ The brute creation to this finer thought', that is, infuses man with truth and virtue.⁶ Thus nature is described as supplying man with joy, tenderness, virtue and truth, which clearly attests to the new, (pseudo-) religious reverence with which it inspires many eighteenth century poets.

Since in one way or another every man comes into contact with nature, the question cannot but arise as to why everybody is not filled with this joy, tenderness, virtue and truth. Since every man is surrounded by beneficent, divine forces, why is not every man a saint? Besides a deprecation of city life and its pernicious influence, the answer most commonly presented may

be inferred from the passage quoted above: God's influence and presence are felt and experienced only by 'ev'ry purer eye'. There are men, however, who owing to their hatred, deceit, and other evil passions have lost 'that concord of harmonious pow'rs'.⁷ These men are incapable of experiencing God in nature since 'joyless inhumanity pervades/ And petrifies the heart', so that by them 'Nature disturb'd/ Is deem'd, vindictive, to have chang'd her course'.⁸ These men, then, have only themselves to blame for having become impervious to the beneficial forces of nature.

No wonder, that the belief in the perfectibility of mankind is cherished by so many eighteenth century poets and thinkers: man only has to rid himself of his self-centredness and open himself up to the divine forces operative in nature in order to attain a state of joy, truth, and harmony with the divine. Often this conception is further specified by an insistence on the necessity of man's passivity in his encounter with nature. If man is passive, he is, as it were, a blank sheet of paper for the Author of nature to write upon; if he is active, preoccupied with his own concerns, nature's beneficent forces are incapable of reaching him. Implicitly, this ideal of passivity is suggested by Thomson when he writes that God's bounty in nature '*melts their undesigning hearts*' in tenderness and joy (*italics mine*).

Having presented the bare and generalized outlines of the tradition, it is now possible to discuss in somewhat greater detail the work of two of its representatives with whose work Coleridge was certainly acquainted, Akenside and Cowper. In accordance with the purpose of this chapter, this discussion will concentrate on those aspects of their work which are relevant to an understanding of Coleridge's poetry. No comprehensive analysis and appreciation of their work can be attempted here. It will appear that the eighteenth-century's respect for nature can be incorporated in different frameworks of thought: Akenside offers a Neoplatonic version of the tradition, while Cowper endeavours to reconcile it to an orthodox, Christian point of view.

Mark Akenside's relevance to the early poetry of Coleridge is generally underestimated. Those critics who refer to him at all, usually dismiss his poetry with non-committal remarks like 'Akenside, who spread the gospel of the divinely-impregnated nature inspiring the poet with its pageantry of cloud-shapes and mountain forms'.⁹ Even P.Deschamps who in his very elaborate study of the development of Coleridge's thought defends the view that his basic allegiance from the very beginning of his career had been to the Platonic vision of the universe and who describes his intellectual develop-

ment in terms of an attempt to reconcile the Platonic vision with a comprehensive and coherent philosophical system, hardly mentions Akenside at all.¹⁰

But the most likely source of any Platonism or Neoplatonism that may be recognized in Coleridge's early attitude to nature is Akenside.¹¹ Not only did Akenside offer him a relatively brief and lucid account of (Neo)Platonism, but also the 1795 *Lectures on Religion* bear ample testimony of Coleridge's intimate acquaintance with his poetry.¹² H.N. Fairchild's remark with respect to Wordsworth can equally be applied to Coleridge, 'It is impossible to know Akenside well without feeling that Wordsworth must have read him with care'.¹³

In his *Pleasures of the Imagination*, Akenside describes the creation in thoroughly Neoplatonic terms. Before the creation, God 'In his unfathom'd essence, view'd the forms,/ The forms eternal of created things'.¹⁴ These forms he imposed on that space 'where Chaos reign'd',¹⁵

he rais'd his plastic arm,
And sounded through the hollow depths of space
The strong, creative mandate.

Thus 'endless forms of being' were created, each form being animated by the divine breath or 'vital flame'¹⁶ which pervades, quickens and moves the whole extent of matter,¹⁷ not only at the creation but 'From day to day'.¹⁸

Consequently nature, being the reflection of the eternal, divine forms, is the place where the Platonic trinity of truth, virtue, and beauty may be encountered,¹⁹

Thus then at first was Beauty sent from Heaven,
The lovely mistress of Truth and Good
In this dark world: for Truth and Good are one;
And Beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation.

Nature itself, however, is quite unaware of its divine origin and status: the linnet cares for her young only by instinct, not by truth or virtue,²⁰ and brutes are caught in 'the transient boons of sense', that 'portal turbulent and loud'.²¹ It is only to some human beings that²²

the Sire Omnipotent unfolds
The world's harmonious volume, there to read
The transcript of Himself. On every part
They trace the bright impressions of his hand:
In earth and air, the meadow's purple stores,
The moon's mild radiance, or the virgin's form

Blooming with rosy smiles, they see portray'd
 That uncreated beauty, which delights
 The mind supreme. They also feel her charms,
 Enamour'd; they partake the eternal joy.

Nevertheless, nature does not afford these human beings a direct vision of divine beauty. It is only through the contemplation of its material manifestation that it can be dimly apprehended.

Akenside develops the mechanics of this process from the perception of corporeal things to the experience of divine beauty in detail and it is interesting to note the different phases he distinguishes. This process is outlined in general terms in the following passage,²³

Man surveys
 A narrower scene, where, by mix'd effect
 Of things corporeal on his passive mind,
 He judgeth what is fair. Corporeal things
 The mind of man impel with various powers,
 And various features to his eye disclose.
 The powers which move his sense with instant joy,
 The features which attract his heart to love,
 He marks, combines, reposit.

Perception necessarily begins on a material level, with the impression of corporeal things on man's passive mind. On this level, man perceives no more than the 'fluctuating forms' of sense, 'fleeting impulse on the sensual powers'.²⁴ Once the human mind has passively registered these impressions of matter, it is activated and begins to "mark, combine, reposit" them, thus imposing an order on 'matter's mouldering structures'.²⁵ Through this process man is able to attain 'Even now, even here, in earth's dim prison bound,/ The language of intelligence divine'.²⁶

On a sensory level, then, man is a passive receiver of the 'vital flame' of nature, but he can only recognize this divine life inherent in nature, its beauty, truth, joy, and virtue, after a mental process of sifting and ordering. Thus, two poles can be distinguished in the perception of the divine in nature: a material, passive pole and a mental, active pole, each providing its indispensable contribution. Without nature, the mind would have nothing to work upon. Without mind, man would have no means of transcending the world of nature, no means of piercing through this veil of matter. In accordance with this view, then, beauty is referred to as 'a child of Nature and the soul' whose 'form divine' 'the mind alone/ Beholds'.²⁷

All knowledge begins in a passive contemplation of nature when man is 'To that harmonious movement from without/ Responsive'.²⁸ The sense impressions thus received are the foundation for the mind to build upon in its attempt to transcend nature and apprehend the divine. Three mental faculties are engaged in this activity: imagination, fancy, and reason. Akenside does not differentiate consistently between imagination and fancy. Neither does Addison, on whose account in the *Spectator* Akenside's conception of the imagination, or fancy is largely based.²⁹ In the following paragraphs I have chosen to refer to "fancy" throughout since in his poem Akenside betrays a slight preference for this term, possibly for metrical reasons.

Fancy is the faculty which reorders and rearranges the impressions of sense enabling man to reconstruct in a world of pure mind the ideal divine forms which in external reality he perceives only through the veil of matter. In other words, fancy "creates" out of the raw materials supplied by the senses a vision of the divine reality beyond sense,³⁰

Thus far of Beauty and the pleasing forms
Which man's untutor'd fancy, from the scenes
Imperfect of this ever changing world,
Creates; and views, enamour'd.

The word "create" may give rise to misunderstanding in this context. To those acquainted with Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination in the *Biographia Literaria*, or, more generally, with the romantic veneration of the imagination, it may seem that Akenside here attributes a role to fancy which is comparable to Coleridge's imagination. As will be discussed shortly, however, Akenside regards the fancy as a faculty working on the basis of association, which reorders and combines the sensuous material, and which should be continually checked by man's reason. In other words, Akenside's conception of fancy should be understood within a Hartleyan framework of thought, and it would be a mistake to read Kantian or Schellingian ideas into it.

It may be added in passing, that it is at least questionable whether Coleridge's German-derived distinction is really as clear-cut as it may appear at first sight. As B. Hardy, for instance, has argued, the assumption of a qualitative difference between fancy and imagination leads to many difficulties both in literary theory and in the practice of literary criticism, and may entail an overestimation of the imagination's power to recreate and unify.³¹ This is, however, a complicated issue which falls beyond the scope of the present discussion.

Although Akenside accords a seminal role to fancy, he considers fancy by itself as a dangerous compass to steer by. There are the allurements of fancy, such as 'Honour, Safety, Pleasure, Ease, or Pomp'³² which may induce man to vice. Ambition, revenge, and lust could be the perverted result. Fancy not controlled by reason may turn out to be a 'deep enchantress' causing man to stray ever further into the spectral world of alienation from God, nature, and truth.³³ Although the light of reason may be impaired by a misapplication of the fancy, man's reason is in itself divine. It does not depend on sensory impulses but is implanted in man by God, it is a pure gift from God's own treasure.³⁴ Ideally, then, man's fancy is guided by his 'unerring reason'³⁵ enabling him to 'climb the ascent of being, and approach/ For ever nearer to the Life divine'.³⁶

Since Coleridge's admiration of Akenside seems greatest at the time when he claims to be a follower of Hartley, it is interesting to note that Akenside's views on the operations of the fancy markedly resemble Hartley's. Akenside holds that fancy operates primarily on the basis of association, as may appear from the following passage,³⁷

For when the different images of things,
By chance combin'd, have struck the attentive soul
With deeper impulse, or connected long,
Have drawn her frequent eye; howe'er distinct
The external scenes, yet oft the ideas gain
From that conjunction an eternal tie,
And sympathy unbroken. Let the mind
Recall one partner of the various league,
Immediate, lo! the firm confederates rise
And each his former station straight resumes:
One movement governs the consenting throng,
And all at once with rosy pleasure shine,
Or all are sadden'd with the gloom of care.

Here Akenside describes how one sense impression activates a host of former impressions — stored as sensible "ideas" in the mind — which are connected or associated with it. The mental ordering and reorganizing of sense impressions, in Akenside's conception an operation performed by the fancy, is thus effected on the basis of an associative process. Since fancy is the faculty which enables man to raise himself beyond the world of mere material appearance, this implies that Akenside accords a major role to association in man's endeavours to transcend the world of matter and gain knowledge of divine truth and beauty.

Hartley places a similar emphasis on the association of ideas which he considers as the fundamental principle on which all human knowledge and experience is based. In order to defend this position he develops a rather involved physiological theory about the vibrations and mini-vibrations which sensation causes in the medullary substance in the brain³⁸ and he concludes that will, intellect, memory and fancy are 'all deducible from the external Impressions made upon the Senses, the Vestiges or Ideas of these, and their mutual Connexions by means of Association, taken together, and operating on one another'.³⁹ Not unlike Akenside, Hartley believes that this process of association ultimately enables man to transcend his present state, or, as he terms it, to reach the pleasures of theopathy and the moral sense.⁴⁰

If we suppose Creatures subject to the law of Association to be placed in the midst of a Variety of Pleasures and Pains, the Sum total of the first being greater than that of the last, and to connect God with each as its sole Cause, Pain will be overpowered by Pleasure, and the infinite Number of compound Pleasures resulting from Association be at last united intirely with the Idea of God.

This is not the place to discuss Hartley's philosophy in detail, but perhaps even from this very cursory glance it can be concluded that Hartley and Akenside concur in believing that all mental activity starts with sensory perception, that the human mind orders and arranges the data of sense by means of association, and that this process eventually leads to an apprehension of divine ideas. If Akenside's poem had not been published five years before Hartley's *Observations*, it would certainly have been regarded as a poetic rendering of a Neoplatonic version of Hartley's philosophy.⁴¹

Akenside's version of the eighteenth century tradition, then, can be described as a combination of Neoplatonism with elements from mechanist, or, more generally, empiricist philosophy. As will be seen, Coleridge's position around 1795 can be characterized in a similar way. It is probably true that, as R. Haven stated, 'Hartley's value to Coleridge was that he demonstrated, or rather attempted to demonstrate, that the religious experience of annihilation of self and union with God could be supported by rational analysis'.⁴² Similarly, Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* may have offered him a relatively short and clear exposition of how empiricism and associationism can be reconciled with such an essentially Neoplatonic conception of God and nature.

Cowper's nature poetry shows that the almost religious role attributed

to nature in the eighteenth century is not only compatible with a Neoplatonic, but also with an orthodox Christian, point of view. Indeed, Cowper's poetry should serve as a check to those critics who are inclined to regard all reverence of nature — and, by implication, virtually all nature poetry — as tending towards pantheism.⁴³

Cowper's love of, and deep respect for, nature is not based on an identification of nature and the divine. Cowper unambiguously affirms the transcendence of God and sees nature as God's creation in which He reveals Himself,⁴⁴

Nature, throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The author of her beauties, who, retir'd
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied.

This transcendent God is, of course, also immanent. He works in and through nature and it is this continuous divine presence to which nature owes its life,⁴⁵

The Lord of all, himself through all diffus'd,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.

Yet although Cowper believes that man can trace in nature 'The signature and stamp of pow'r divine',⁴⁶ he considers God's revelation of Himself in nature as in itself insufficient, as merely subsidiary to verbal revelation. This appears from the following lines,⁴⁷

Instruct me, guide me, to that heav'nly day
Thy words more clearly than thy works display.

The distinctive roles of these two ways of divine revelation may be inferred from the fifth book of *The Task*, where Cowper distinguishes three types of contact a creature can have with nature. Firstly, there are the 'brutes' that are only intent on finding food in nature, 'heedless' of the other treasures nature can offer. Then there is the man who superficially admires nature without establishing any real contact with it, 'the landscape has his praise,/ But not its author'. Finally, there is 'the mind that has been touch'd from heaven' and has been taught 'in the school of sacred wisdom', who can discern in all things 'A ray of heav'nly light'.⁴⁸ Thus Cowper believes that only the devout Christian who has previous knowledge of God through verbal revelation can experience nature in its full glory.

Why this should be so, is suggested in the following lines,⁴⁹

His are the mountains, and the valleys his,

And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
 With a propriety that none can feel,
 But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
 Can lift to heaven an unpretentious eye,
 And smiling say — My Father made them all!

The key notion in this passage is 'filial confidence', indicating a unique family relation between man and nature: the fact that both were created, and are both from moment to moment sustained, by the same Father. The man who acknowledges this sacred bond 'receives sublim'd/ New faculties'.⁵⁰ Nature fills him with 'holy joy' and 'worthy thoughts', because there he experiences his Maker.⁵¹

In 'Retirement' Cowper uses the image of the harp to make a similar point. Man is like a harp which, if rightly tuned, is in harmony with nature, but if the harp is ill-tuned, alienation occurs, and nothing in nature can 'call up life into his faded eye'.⁵² Again, it is man's attitude to God which determines whether he experiences nature's life or not, 'Yet seek him, in his favour life is found'.⁵³ Cowper's position is aptly summarized in his dictum, 'Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste/ His works'.⁵⁴

Like Thomson and Akenside, then, Cowper believes that man's attitude determines whether he is capable of receiving or apprehending the divine life of nature. Moreover, since nature is conceived of as revelation second only to the Scriptures, it is clear that in Cowper all tendency towards projectionism, towards the idea of man's activity in perception, is absent. Ideally, man experiences in nature intimations of divine life which exist objectively in external reality independent of human influence or activity.

It remains to summarize the findings of this chapter concerning eighteenth century nature poetry. It has appeared that nature is described as being pervaded and sustained by an inherent, animating, divine force. For the man who is capable of passively receiving the influxes of nature, external reality becomes in one way or another a revelation of the divine, filling him with peace, inner harmony and joy, with wisdom 'such as books and schools cannot give',⁵⁵ with virtue and moral awareness. If a man does not experience nature's beneficial and elevating influence, this is primarily due to his own evil, or at least preoccupied, state of mind which prevents him from opening himself up to the life of nature.

This new semi-divine status of nature can be presented in — and reconciled with — various frameworks of thought or religious allegiances.

Although this new interest in nature can probably be regarded as a symptom of the decline of Christianity as a commonly accepted, integrating factor in human life and society, it does not necessarily tend towards pantheism and is in itself not inimical to Christianity.

CHAPTER II

THE TRADITIONAL CHARACTER OF COLERIDGE'S EARLY POETRY

This chapter will deal with the poetry Coleridge wrote up to 1795. As will be seen, the poetry of this period is thoroughly conventional in that it lacks a clear, personal voice and rehearses rather uncritically many of the stock images and ideas of the eighteenth century tradition.¹

A characteristic early poem, 'Life' (1789), may serve as an introduction to the young Coleridge's attitude to nature,

As late I journey'd o'er the extensive plain
Where native Otter sports his scanty stream,
Musing in torpid woe a Sister's pain,
The glorious prospect woke me from the dream.

At every step it widen'd to my sight —
Wood, Meadow, verdant Hill, and dreary Steep,
Following in quick succession of delight, —
Till all — at once — did my eye ravish'd sweep!

May this (I cried) my course through Life portray!
New scenes of Wisdom may each step display,
And Knowledge open as my days advance!
Till what time Death shall pour the undarken'd ray,
My eye shall dart thro' infinite expanse,
And thought suspended lie in Rapture's blissful trance.

In the octave Coleridge seems to describe a real experience he has had in nature. At least, this is suggested by the rather detailed information about the time ('As late ...'), place and circumstances which is supplied in the first lines. He is 'musing in torpid woe' as was the habit of so many eighteenth century poets and rejected lovers. But as he approaches the summit of some unspecified hill and the prospect 'at every step', 'in quick succession' opens out before him, he is struck by a feeling of inexpressible, and indeed unexpressed, delight. The change from torpid woe to the heights of bliss takes only five lines which gives the supposed experience an air of unreality.

In the sestet it appears that this experience is used as an emblem, as an extended simile of the life the poet hopes to live, starting from ignorance through ever increasing wisdom to a suspension of thought at death, somewhat strangely described as 'Rapture's blissful trance'. The octave dealing with the poet's experience of nature, then, does not reveal any special interest in nature, but merely serves as a convenient emblem of his 'course through life'. As A.S. Gérard puts it, 'He is chiefly interested in the workings of his own mind, and his only concern in looking at nature is to discover there an analogue for what goes on in his mind'.²

It is clear that the poem fails to establish a unity between the emblem and its application, primarily because the basis of comparison between the octave describing an ever increasing delight in nature, and the sestet treating of the acquisition of knowledge is left unspecified. For instance, the connection between that curious bliss at death in which the sestet culminates, and the feelings of delight occasioned by a view from a hill is at first sight elusive and obscure. The poet is clearly endeavouring to make a statement about life (or death?) and in order to do this he makes use of an experience he has had (or thinks he could have had) in nature, but he is as yet unable to accomplish its unified expression in poetic language.

Although the basis of comparison between octave and sestet is not explicitly stated, however, it is clear that Coleridge unmistakably implies their connection. This can only mean that the ideas which could have given unity to the conception of the poem must have been so immediately self-evident to him that he was not even conscious of employing them, or, at least, that he did not deem it necessary to make them explicit. Thus, the artistic unity of this sonnet depends on ideas which remain unexpressed but must have seemed obvious to Coleridge on the basis of tradition.

What these connecting ideas are can be surmised by studying the poem somewhat more closely. In the octave Coleridge describes nature's soothing influence starting with dejection and ending in rapture, in an experience of one-ness with the joy of nature. Such a description belongs, of course, to the stock-in-trade of eighteenth century poetry and nobody reading the poem in the last decade of that century would have taken exception to it, or would have been inclined to question the conception of nature on which it is based. It was one of the common assumptions or prejudices of the time.

From the parallelism between the octave and sestet, some of these underlying assumptions can be divined. Firstly, from the implied connection between the acquisition of knowledge, and joy in nature, it can be concluded

that nature is conceived of as teacher — with some good will, one could argue that this is also suggested by the word 'dream'. More explicitly, the poet's initial misery is attributed to ignorance, comparable to the lack of knowledge and wisdom of youth, and owing to the wisdom imparted to him by nature he begins to recognize and experience the essential joyfulness of nature and life. Secondly, the fact that the 'blissful trance' at death is regarded as analogous to the experience of joy in nature, may indicate that nature's joy is ultimately of a transcendent character, that it is somehow due to the operation of divine forces in nature.³ In itself, there is of course nothing remarkable about the idea of nature as teacher, or of its being in some way related to the divine. But that is just the point: virtually all the ideas in 'Life' are clichés of the eighteenth century tradition.

Thus Coleridge's relation to the tradition has been established. He adopts its stock notions without as yet having arrived at an articulate, personal framework of thought which might give consistency and unity to these notions. He accepts them on the basis of an uncritical faith rather than a well-considered conviction.

In this interpretation of 'Life' some characteristic features of Coleridge's early poetry have been encountered, notably 1) the emblematic use of nature, 2) nature as a place of contemplation, 3) nature as joy-inspiring, and, rather more implicitly, 4) nature as teacher, and 5) nature as having some uncertain connection with the divine. Since the last two ideas seldom occur explicitly in Coleridge's early poetry, it seems best to concentrate on the first three aspects and attempt to show how they are developed in his poetry up to 1795.

Coleridge often uses nature as a sort of "picture book" with which general statements about life and morality are illustrated. Besides 'Life', examples of this are found in, for instance, 'Sonnet to the Autumnal Moon' (1788) and 'A Wish' (1795). The most interesting example of this use of nature imagery is found in 'Lines Written at Shurton Bars' (1795) in which the poet tries to comfort his Sara who experiences the 'tender woes of Love' by comparing her solitude due to the temporary absence of her lover, with the real solitude of the 'houseless, friendless wretch'.

In this poem Coleridge, possibly following the example of Collins' 'Ode to Evening', describes two scenes of nature as "objective correlatives" of the two types of loneliness. Real solitude is described as a 'sad gloom-pamper'd Man' sitting alone on an island surrounded by a black, threatening universe filled with tempest and thunder,

When mountain surges bellowing deep

With an uncouth monster-leap
Plung'd foaming on the shore.

By way of contrast the gentle melancholy Sara feels is likened to 'those smiling tears, that swell/ The open'd rose'. By describing these two scenes the poet shows Sara that her sadness is happiness compared to the bleak despair other people experience. It is obvious, however, that this emblematic, or if one wishes symbolic, use of nature does not signify any intrinsic interest in nature itself, since it merely uses nature to make or clarify a statement about something else.

With this the emblematic use of nature could be dismissed, were it not for the fact that some critics consider most romantic nature poetry as emblematic in character. They regard romantic nature poetry as a development from the eighteenth century convention of nature similes. In the eighteenth century, they argue, the meaning or point of reference of the simile was explicitly stated, while romantic nature poetry carries this practice one step further: it presents a simile, whose application or meaning is implied in the description.

Perhaps the most influential exposition of this view is found in W.K. Wimsatt's essay on 'Romantic Nature Imagery'. He tries to demonstrate that in romantic poetry nature is used as a metaphor to describe something of human interest. He considers it characteristic of the romantic treatment of nature that the metaphor (i.e. nature) and that to which it refers are telescoped into one statement, the tenor and vehicle being wrought 'in a parallel process out of the same material',⁴ so that the metaphorical quality of the nature description is scarcely noticed.

By way of example Wimsatt discusses 'Sonnet, To the River Otter' (1793?), a poem in which Coleridge expresses a nostalgic longing for his lost childhood associated with the river Otter. The discussion of the following passage from this poem may serve as an illustration of his view,

yet so deep imprest
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny ray,
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey,
And bedded sand that vein'd with various dyes
Gleam'd through thy bright transparence!

According to Wimsatt, this detailed account of the river is not only a description of an actual memory of a scene from the poet's childhood, its minute

details suggesting the acuteness of his sense of loss, but also a metaphor of the act of remembering itself.⁵ He asserts that the visions of childhood 'rise like the tinted waters of the stream; they gleam up through the depths of memory ... like the "various dyes" which vein the sand of the river bed' (italics mine).⁶ From this he concludes that 'there is a rich ground of meaning in Coleridge's sonnet beyond what is overtly stated'.⁷ Although he recognizes that the metaphor is not easily noticed and that it may very well have been incorporated in the poem unconsciously, he nevertheless offers this concealed metaphor as a characteristic example of what he calls 'romantic wit'.

All this is not only fanciful, but as a suggested method of reading romantic nature poetry it is seriously misleading. It is far-fetched to regard the 'tinted waters of the stream' as a metaphor of the act of remembering, simply because remembering and the water of a stream have nothing in common. Memories 'rise like the tinted waters of the stream', Wimsatt states, whereas it is clear from the poem that memories of the stream, 'deep impress' in his brain during his childhood, rise up in the poet's mind. Or does he imply that the water of the stream is actually rising?

This would, however, be superfluous quibbling if Wimsatt, with all the authority of his deserved reputation as a theoretician, did not draw from this puzzling interpretation of such an apparently straightforward and conventional poem general conclusions about the character and interpretation of romantic nature descriptions. According to him, it is the task of the critic to find the concealed metaphor in a description of nature, or, as he puts it, to discern 'the design which is latent in the multiform sensuous picture'.⁸ In view of the ingenuity some critics display in finding unconscious or hidden meanings, a remark like this seems like opening floodgates of critical reservoirs which one would rather do without.

But more importantly, this method would completely neglect the interest of the romantics in nature itself. Coleridge struggled for many years to find an intrinsic meaning in nature, not dependent on his own projection of human meaning, and even though he finally lost this struggle — which only from a post-romantic point of view may seem inevitable — it would result in a serious misunderstanding of his development if we interpreted his nature descriptions only as metaphors of some underlying human meaning. Wimsatt affirms that 'the common feat of the romantic nature poets was to read meanings into the landscape',⁹ while it is presumably the task of the critic to read them out of the landscape again. This overlooks the attempt of at least the early romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge to determine the value of the landscape in itself and to understand what they saw as the revelation of God in nature.¹⁰

Intense as Coleridge's interest in nature was to become later, in the period up to 1795 his conception and use of nature were still largely conventional. This also appears from a consideration of the way in which Coleridge describes nature as a place of contemplation, another aspect of the eighteenth century tradition he adopted uncritically. In his poetry he often employs nature as no more than a vaguely inspiring atmosphere in which the poet can contemplate the things — usually love — that occupy his mind. Thus nature seems to perform a function similar to the equally vague inspiration the muses are invoked to supply in other poems.¹¹

'To the Nightingale' presents a characteristic example of the inspiration afforded by nature. Listening to the 'pity-pleading strains' of the nightingale, the poet's reaction is described as follows,

O! I have listen'd, till my working soul,
Waked by those strains to thousand phantasies,
Absorb'd hath ceased to listen!

Here nature is clearly no more than a starting device triggering off many associations and thoughts. It is significant that his 'phantasies' do not lead to a greater interest in — or understanding of — the nightingale's song, but rather induce a train of thought that leads away from nature, to a forgetting of nature's presence.¹²

A similar tendency can be recognized in 'Lines on an Autumnal Evening' (1793). In this rather curious poem the poet, watching an autumnal sunset near his 'dear native brook' where in the past he had wooed his beloved, actually invokes the aid of Fancy, 'lovely Sorceress', in order *not* to see the sunset but to lose himself in the associations relating to the maiden he loves, evoked by the scenery. The poet has come to nature, not to establish any meaningful contact with it, but solely because it activates his imagination, because he wishes to dwell on the past when 'by my native brook I wont to rove,/ While Hope with kisses nurs'd the Infant Love'.

In the third stanza the poet succeeds in conjuring up a vision of his beloved and as if to emphasize its unrelatedness to the actual natural scenery around him, he describes his vision as follows, 'I mark her glancing mid the gleam of *dawn*', and a few lines later 'She meets my lonely path in *moonbeams* clad' (*italics mine*). Although he only revisits the brook because he regards it as a link with his former hopes of winning his beloved and is not at all interested in the place for its own sake, nature's influence seems nevertheless indispensable to the sustaining of his dreams of fancy since the disappearance of the sun marks, perhaps even occasions, the ending of his dreams.¹³

Scenes of my Hope! the aching eye ye leave
 Like yon bright hues that paint the clouds of eve!
 Tearful and saddening with the sadden'd blaze
 Mine eye the gleam pursues with wistful gaze:
 Sees shades on shades with deeper tint impend,
 Till chill and damp the moonless night descend.

It is remarkable that in this poem the visions of the poet are not only unrelated to the scenery surrounding him, but are in fact incompatible with it (sunset versus 'gleam of dawn' and 'moon-beams'). About a year later he condemns this lack of harmony between vision and nature, inner and outer. Commenting on one of Southey's poems, he writes,¹⁴

These two Stanzas are exquisite — but the lovely thought of "the hot Sun &c as pityless as proud Prosperity ["] — loses part of it's Beauty by the Time being Night. It is among the chief excellencies of Bowles, that his Imagery appears almost always prompted by the surrounding Scenery.

Yet the very wording of this statement (cf. 'appears') reveals that it is not induced by any special interest in nature itself, but that he is merely outlining a strategy to arrive at poetic unity.¹⁵

Another characteristic aspect of Coleridge's treatment of nature in this period is that nature is often described as imparting feelings of joy to the beholder. Instances of this were already encountered, in passing, in 'Life' and 'To the Evening Star'.¹⁶ Another example is found in 'Songs of the Pixies' (1793) in which these legendary creatures of nature inspire the melancholy poet with joy, 'Weaving gay dreams of sunny-tinctur'd hue', shedding 'O'er his hush'd soul our soothing witcheries'. And even in 'Pain', a poem describing alienation from nature due to disease, the essentially joyful character of nature is not questioned,

Once could the Morn's first beams, the healthful breeze,
 All Nature charm, and gay was every hour:—
 But ah! not Music's self, nor fragrant bower
 Can glad the trembling sense of wan Disease.

Nowhere in these poems is it specified why and in what manner nature is associated with joy. It seems to be taken for granted on the basis of experience, or, more probably, eighteenth century poetic tradition.

Some critics have argued that already in his early poetry Coleridge betrays a clear, Platonist or Plotinian allegiance. As Wilde states, 'From first to last, Coleridge was a Platonist of the mystic type ... always at heart akin to those believers in the direct vision of truth who have claimed the name and authority of Plato'.¹⁷ Yet the preceding survey of his treatment of nature

up to 1795 hardly bears out such an inclination towards Platonism. On the contrary, if it is accepted that, as B. Willey affirms, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries 'The emotion of the "numinous", formerly associated with super-nature, had become attached to Nature itself; and by the end of the eighteenth century the divinity, the sacredness of nature was, to those affected by this tradition, almost a first datum of consciousness',¹⁸ it is remarkable that nowhere in his early poetry does Coleridge explicitly relate nature to the divine.

As will be seen, in 1795 Coleridge's attitude to nature developed in a Platonic, or rather Neoplatonic direction, taking up those aspects of Akenside and Cudworth that could be reconciled to associationist theories like Hartley's, but it is simply not true that from the very beginning he had been a Platonist at heart, if the evidence of his poetry counts for anything. In 'Life' an implied reference to nature as imparting wisdom and an even vaguer suggestion of divine immanence was recognized, but the explicit argument of the poem is so conventional that one can hardly deduce a Platonic attitude from it,¹⁹ or any other attitude for that matter.

Up to 1795, then, Coleridge's use of nature is thoroughly traditional, fitting as far as it goes within the framework of eighteenth century nature poetry. The poems do not attest to a systematic interest in nature itself and nowhere approach the emotional intensity of a Cowper or the philosophical sophistication of an Akenside. They take a beneficial atmosphere and joy-infusing force for granted without creating a clearly defined framework within which these qualities assigned to nature are embedded or by which they are explained.

CHAPTER III

THE 1796 POEMS AND THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

The first indication of a more than conventional interest in nature is found in 'Lines Composed While Climbing the Left Ascent of Brockley Coomb, May 1795', which presents a detailed description of the mountain scenery through which the poet is walking. In a letter of 1794 Coleridge had written,¹

I have bought a little Blank Book, and portable Inkhorn — as I journey onward, I ever and anon pluck the coil'd Flowers of Poesy — inhale their odours awhile — then throw them away and think no more of them — I will not do so!

This poem is probably one of the fruits of this resolve. Here nature is not used as simile, but described as something significant in itself.

It is clearly no more than a first attempt: Coleridge is as yet unable to express the emotions nature seems to arouse in him satisfactorily. This appears most clearly from the poem's climax where he describes the view from the hill,

Ah! what a luxury of landscape meets
My gaze! Proud towers, and Cots more dear to me,
Elm-shadow'd Fields, and prospect-bounding Sea!
Deep sighs my lonely heart: I drop the tear:
Enchanting spot! O were my Sara here!

The number of exclamation marks suggests that Coleridge finds his language inadequate to the occasion, and the final reference to Sara cannot but be seen as a saving device to round off the nature poem by alluding to an emotion not aroused by nature. Insignificant as the poem may be, however, it points to the beginning of a real interest in nature.

In the course of 1795 and 1796 Coleridge attempts to find a rational basis for his interest in nature. He tries to establish a framework of thought which could serve as basis and explanation of his largely tradition-derived attitude to nature. 'The Destiny of Nations', 'Religious Musings', and 'The

Eolian Harp' are the most important witnesses to this attempt. Since it seems quite impossible to be certain of the chronological order in which these poems were written — it is likely that Coleridge was working on all three of them during the last months of 1795² — I have chosen to concentrate in my discussion on 'The Eolian Harp' since this is clearly the best poem. Passages from 'The Destiny of Nations' and 'Religious Musings' will be used to elucidate and confirm the conclusions drawn from the interpretation of this poem.

It is important to realize that the definitive version of 'The Eolian Harp' is a collage of fragments written between 1795 and 1817. Failure to recognize this has led some critics to a distorted view of Coleridge's development.³ The famous 'one Life' passage, for instance, was only added to the poem in 1817 and was probably not even originally composed with this poem in mind.⁴

A careful reading of the poem shows that the implications of the harp image, which informs the greater part of the poem, and those of the 'one Life' passage are incompatible. As will be argued, the harp image implies the idea of the essential passivity of man who is shaped and determined by external natural forces, whereas the 'one Life' notion involves activity on the part of man since it affirms a state of ideal harmony between inner and outer, the act of the creative imagination (man's influence on nature) being imaginatively fused with nature's influence on man. It was not until after his trip to Germany that Coleridge developed the idea of the 'one Life'.⁵ The 'one Life' passage, then, does not fit into the poem as originally conceived and destroys the unity of its final version. Moreover, it has misled critics into reading the whole poem as a celebration of the 'one Life', as a poem 'où triomphe l'idée de l'harmonie entre l'homme et la nature', as P. Deschamps puts it.⁶ For the purposes of this study a consideration of the 1796 version will suffice, while a first draft of 1795 offers an insight into the genesis of the poem.⁷

The first draft of the poem was written two months before Coleridge's marriage in August 1795. It is a love poem in which the setting, the nature surrounding the poet and Sara, is just as important as the lovers themselves. The whole fragment evokes an atmosphere of almost paradisaical harmony between Sara, the poet, and nature, the landscape reflecting and, perhaps, even contributing to their feelings of harmony and love: their cot is covered with jasmine and myrtle, emblems of innocence and love, the evening star suggests Sara's 'polish'd Sense', the smell of the bean-field and the silence of the whole scene may be taken to imply the serene beauty and peace that mark their relationship.

Then the wind-harp is introduced,

In the half-closed window we will place the Harp,
Which by the desultory Breeze caress'd,
Like some coy maid half willing to be woo'd,
Utters such sweet upbraidings as, perforce,
Tempt to repeat the wrong!

The wind-harp image aptly symbolizes the unity of the lovers and nature: it is the wind playing on the harp which gives voice to the love they feel for each other. The wording of the image introduces a sexual element into the poem. Just as the wind is caressing the harp "desultorily" — that is, without premeditated intent, proceeding, as it were, naturally from the situation — so the unity the lovers experience will also find its natural expression in caressing and love making. Unless it is taken ironically, the word 'wrong' seems out of place in this context, since by raising doubt concerning the righteousness of these caresses, it detracts from the harmonious unity of love between Sara, poet, and nature which has been so carefully built up in this fragment.

Some critics believe that here the real intention of the poet, namely to seduce Sara, becomes apparent. G. Yarlott, for instance, asserts that this part of the poem 'builds up to a sort of rhythmic orgasm, as though tempting, blandishing, and finally seducing Sara into accepting what normally her understanding would reject'.⁸ But this is to mistake the tone of the poem which describes the 'soothing sweet' mood of quietness and love, of innocent happiness and 'conjugal serenity'.⁹ Besides, if this were the meaning of the harp image it would clearly be offensive to Sara, who would be like the helpless harp which cannot but comply with the wishes of the wind.

This 1795 fragment celebrating the harmony between the lovers and nature, Coleridge later developed into a poem of much greater scope in which he attempts to define man's relation to nature by means of the wind-harp image. First of all, he broadens the application of the image,

and now its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfin's make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Faery Land,
Where *Melodies* round honey-dropping flowers
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause nor perch, hov'ring on untam'd wing.

In these lines the application of the wind-harp image is not restricted to the two lovers anymore; the image has acquired a more general validity as a description of nature's influence on man. The natural breeze leads not only to the domestic bliss of the two lovers, but to an ideal world of harmony and beauty for all mankind. The wind-harp has become a symbol of nature's beneficial influence on man, ultimately impelling him to a paradisaal state of joy and happiness almost beyond description.

In the second stanza (ll. 34-52 of the definitive version) Coleridge draws the consequences from the wind-harp image: nature influences man, as wind playing on a harp. Like the harp, man is merely a passive receiver. This one-sided relation is not what might have been expected on the basis of the first stanza. There the poet associated the jasmine and myrtle with innocence and love, and the evening star with Sara's 'polish'd Sense',¹⁰ thus imposing his own interpretation on nature. Consequently, one would have expected the description of a reciprocal relation between man and nature, or at least the acceptance of some human activity in interpreting the appearances of nature. Nevertheless the poet's insistence on human passivity is unmistakable and the emblematic use of nature in the first stanza must be regarded as a somewhat inconsistent remnant of the traditional first phase of his development.

Of course, one could argue that in this second stanza Coleridge becomes the victim of the wind-harp image, such a harp by its very nature being passive. But that would amount to asserting that the poem does not mean what it says. Besides, the wind-harp lends itself to applications different from the one Coleridge gives it here, as may appear from Victor Hugo's use of the image, 'La nature est la grande lyre,/ Le poëte est l'archet divin!'.¹¹

In Coleridge's treatment of the image, nature is the wind and the poet, or man, is the harp merely registering the impulses of nature. How the poet can become like a wind-harp is described as follows,

And thus, my Love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon
Whilst thro' my half-clos'd eyelids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
Full many a thought uncall'd and undetain'd,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain
As wild and various, as the random gales
That swell or flutter on this subject Lute!

It is striking to note the extent to which the poet is willing to give up his personal identity, and to become like a completely passive thing played on by external forces. First he develops a mood in harmony with nature ('And tranquil muse upon tranquillity'). Then he stops all conscious thought making his brain 'indolent and passive' so that, like the harp, he becomes an instrument for nature to play on. This gives rise to 'Full many a thought uncalled and undetained', thoughts innocent of any conscious effort or interference of the poet. M. Suther has admirably summed up Coleridge's position here, 'he tended to overemphasize what Richards calls the "realist" view of the experience, to the point that the poet became an inanimate or very nearly inanimate harp across which the winds of the spirit of nature blew and made music — a self-prepared but merely passive receiver of the "influxes" of nature'.¹²

As was argued in chapter I, the idea of human passivity constituted an intrinsic part of the eighteenth century tradition of nature poetry. In the following passage from Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, for instance, a process closely resembling the one outlined by Coleridge is presented,¹³

even so did Nature's hand
To certain species of external things,
Attune the finer organs of the mind:
So the glad impulse of congenial powers,
Or of sweet sound, or fair proportion'd form,
The grace or motion, or the bloom of light,
Thrills through imagination's tender frame,
From nerve to nerve: all naked and alive
They catch the spreading rays: till now the soul
At length discloses every tuneful spring,
To that harmonious movement from without
Responsive.

The central image of this passage is man as an instrument on which the external forces of nature play. Man's mind is here described as being ideally attuned to the reception of external impulses and, again, all reference to a conscious, active interference of man in the process is conspicuously absent. It is basically due to man's physiological and mental make-up that he can reach an ideal harmony with nature, that he can experience how in nature's frame 'the great Artificer portrays/ His own immense idea'.¹⁴ The "Hartleyan elements" in Akenside's description ('From nerve to nerve') may also be relevant to Coleridge's case.

In 'The Eolian Harp', then, Coleridge is not propounding any radically

new idea, but is merely presenting his own version of an eighteenth century convention. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference from Akenside. Whereas Akenside offers nothing more, or less, than a theoretical exposition of man's relation to nature, of what occurs in the act of perception and what this can lead up to, Coleridge is much more concerned with the practical consequences and implications of this theory. He actually climbs a hill, lies down, and attempts to experience "on his pulses" what it means to be passively receptive to 'that harmonious movement from without'. In this respect 'The Eolian Harp' marks a new stage in Coleridge's development: he has become interested in nature in its own right. As Gérard puts it, the poem attests to 'the intensity of his newly felt experience of nature'.¹⁵

The part of the poem informed by the wind-harp image culminates in a passage of almost philosophical conjecture,

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversly fram'd,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual Breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

The philosophical background of Coleridge's position will be discussed in detail later. Suffice it to say at this point that these lines make explicit what was already implied in the harp image. On the one hand, they advance a Neoplatonic conception of man and nature as emanations of the divine, as owing their life and identity¹⁶ to the 'intellectual Breeze' which originates from God. On the other hand, an empiricist, or, more specifically, a Hartleyan aspect can be recognized.¹⁷ Man "trembles into thought" as he receives the influxes of the animating, divine force present in nature, in line with the necessitarian dogma that man is no more than the sum total of his perceptions, and the associations these occasion.

If one wants to press a little further, one could argue that Coleridge here implies that all matter is essentially lifeless and inert and that it is animated by God's continuous immanence in nature, God being the animating, "plastic", life-giving force in nature, its soul. This also appears from a passage added to the poem in the 1797 version,

Thus God would be the universal Soul,
Mechaniz'd matter as th' organic harps
And each one's Tunes be that which each calls I.

Here God is conceived as the life-giving power (*natura naturans*), nature and man being that which God shapes into life (*natura naturata*).

The 'intellectual Breeze' passage has given rise to a veritable shower of critical comment and debate, especially relating to its possible sources. On the whole this source criticism has not been very helpful since, as K. Everest rightly notes, 'The philosophical "sources" of the conversation poems do not help us to read them'.¹⁸ An examination of the passage in its poetic context suffices to establish that it presents a combination of Neoplatonic and empiricist ideas, and it seems comparatively insignificant whether the Neoplatonic element is based on Boehme, Berkeley, Plotinus, Akenside, or Cudworth, or whether its empiricist aspects should be attributed to Hartley, Priestley, or, again, Akenside.¹⁹

This passage, then, is an attempt to incorporate and explain the conventions of eighteenth century nature poetry within an articulated, almost metaphysical framework of thought. Nevertheless, Coleridge is extremely cautious in proposing these views. Not only is the statement presented in the form of a question ('And what if ...'), but also in the final part of the poem he virtually retracts these philosophical speculations and unambiguously asserts his allegiance to the Christian faith,

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallow'd dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.

Some critics seem to resent Sara's intrusion at this point and blame her for what they regard as the disappointing and insincere close of the poem.²⁰ But this is to fly in the face of the facts. In Coleridge's 1795 lectures, for instance, one is impressed by their deeply religious, at times overtly Christian tone; as the editors comment in their introduction, 'Most notably, the lectures reveal how deeply important to him at this time was his attachment to the Christian revelation'.²¹ Yarlott is certainly right when he suspects that the opposition between Sara's humble faith and Coleridge's 'unregenerate mind' is '(partly at least) a device for dramatizing the conflict within himself';²² or, as Gérard puts it, 'Sara is but a mouthpiece for something in Coleridge himself'.²³

In 'The Eolian Harp' Coleridge is moving towards an articulated theory of man's relation to nature and God. What he comes up with in the central part of the poem is a mixture of Neoplatonism and necessitarianism which owing to its emphasis on passivity, hardly leaves any room for man as a (self) conscious and rational being and implies a conception of God closer to an impersonal, natural force than to the personal, transcendent God of Christ-

ianity. After evincing these views, however, he immediately dismisses them, probably because he feels doubtful as to whether the metaphysical "explanation" he had devised could be reconciled with Christianity. The final lines of the poem make unequivocally clear where his final allegiance would lie if he had to choose between 'These shapings of the unregenerate mind' and a Christian 'Faith that inly *feels*'.

One of the most striking features of 'The Eolian Harp' is its unreserved insistence on man's passivity in his encounter with nature. Before discussing the philosophical background of this idea, some further information regarding his adoption of this rather extreme notion can be derived from some remarks Coleridge makes in a letter of 1795. After stating that man is 'liable to be shaped & coloured by surrounding Objects', he continues,²⁴

The pleasures, which we receive from rural beauties, are of little Consequence compared with the Moral Effect of these pleasures — beholding constantly the Best possible we at last become ourselves the best possible. In the country, all around us smile Good and Beauty — and the Images of this divine καλοκάγαθον are miniaturized on the mind of the beholder, as a Landscape on a Convex Mirror.

In this statement the empiricist notion that man is 'shaped ... by surrounding Objects' is combined with the Neoplatonic idea of nature as the place where the divine ideas of Good and Beauty may be encountered.

Coleridge's remarks suggest that this marriage of Neoplatonism and empiricism may have been concluded on the basis of a line of argument like the following: a) in nature the forces of the divine καλοκάγαθον are operative, and b) man is shaped by his perceptions of nature. From a) and b) it follows that if man is completely shaped by nature, that is, subjects himself unreservedly to nature's influence by becoming passive, he cannot but finally approach a state of divine perfection. Similarly, Hartley envisioned a state of ultimate bliss for mankind on the basis of his system of necessity, when 'the idea of God ... must, at last take place of, and absorb all other ideas, and He himself become, according to the Language of the Scriptures, *All in All*'.²⁵ Even though this line of argument may be deficient in theory,²⁶ and lead to impossibility in practice, Coleridge's enthusiasm for the scheme of Pantisocracy indicates that he maintained these ideas.²⁷

Since the idea of human passivity plays such a central role in Coleridge's pre-German poetry, it is necessary to discuss its background and implications in some detail. The Hartleyan elements in 'The Eolian Harp' suggest that

the notion of passivity tends to occur in the philosophical climate of empiricism. This can also be surmised from a statement Coleridge makes in a letter of November 1794,

after a diligent, I *may* say, an intense study of Locke, Hartley, and others who have written most wisely on the Nature of Man — I appear to myself to see the point of *possible* perfection at which the world may perhaps be destined to arrive.

Locke, it will be remembered, believed that 'perception is the first operation of all our intellectual faculties, and the inlet of all knowledge into our minds'.²⁹ On this, all that the human mind can accomplish is based, 'All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here'.³⁰ Moreover, Locke is of the opinion that in perception 'the understanding is merely passive', 'For the objects of our senses do, many of them, obtrude their particular ideas upon our minds whether we will or no'.³¹ As he puts it elsewhere, 'in bare naked perception the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives, it cannot avoid perceiving'.³² These Lockean ideas of perception as the basis of all knowledge and of man's passivity in perception were extremely influential in eighteenth century England. They were developed in great physiological detail in Hartley's system of necessity, were one of the basic principles of Berkeley's immaterialism, and even coloured Akenside's Neoplatonic vision of the world.

Since in the course of 1795 and 1796 Coleridge repeatedly claims to be a follower of Hartley and, later, Berkeley,³³ it seems likely that his emphasis on passivity has its ideational roots in their basically empiricist philosophies. This rather sweeping statement demands justification. Mentioning Hartley and Berkeley in one breath as parallel influences may at first sight appear an unwarranted simplification, if not a plain confusion of thought. Hartley's philosophy, after all, verges on materialism in its implications — in this respect his follower Priestley merely draws the logical consequences of his philosophy in a more outspoken materialist direction³⁴ — while Berkeley was an immaterialist. Moreover, the fundamentally empiricist allegiance of Berkeley's philosophy is not commonly accepted. Therefore a discussion of the relation between Hartley's and Berkeley's philosophical systems within the broader framework of empiricism is inevitable. My general thesis is that with regard to the issues at stake here there is a large measure of concurrence between their philosophies, however different they may be in other respects.

It should be noted that this is not just a philosophical excursus with little

relevance to an understanding of Coleridge's development. Very often it is assumed that Coleridge's adoption of Berkeleyan philosophy marks the beginning of a change towards German idealism. As J.V.Baker asserts, 'A good case can be made out for the contention that the real overthrewer of Hartley in Coleridge's thinking was Berkeley rather than Kant — Kant merely, at a later stage, confirmed the overthrow'.³⁵ I hope to show that statements like these betray a serious misapprehension of Berkeley's philosophy, and lead to misunderstanding concerning Coleridge's development. Berkeley not so much overthrew the empiricist bias which characterizes Coleridge's adoption of Hartleyan philosophy, as refined it. Besides, Berkeley may have made him more aware of the feasibility of a marriage between empiricism and Neoplatonism although Akenside's role in this respect should not be discarded. Of course, one can never be certain which ideas in Hartley or Berkeley attracted Coleridge, and which he accepted, beyond what is revealed by his own statements and poetry. Therefore it is not so much the purpose of this section to define and determine specific ideas Coleridge may have derived from them, as to establish the general philosophical climate and tendency of his thought.

First, some attention must be paid to the empiricist character of Berkeley's philosophy which is usually undervalued.³⁶ Often, his philosophy is described as "subjective idealism" which seems to suggest that the mind of man, and not the perception of the external world, is the determining factor in his thought. J.W.Beach is hardly an exception when he writes with regard to a later phase in Coleridge's development, 'Still further, Coleridge indicates — allying himself with the idealism of Berkeley and the Germans — the very nature which we behold with the bodily eye is in some sense the creation of our own minds, and dependent upon them for the character it bears'.³⁷ As far as Berkeley is concerned, this remark is almost the opposite of the truth.

Misrepresentations such as these may be due to Berkeley's idiosyncratic use of the word "idea" — by which he usually means sense perceptions — but it is unmistakable that one of the main purposes of his philosophical writings is to demonstrate the absolute trustworthiness of man's sense perceptions, which he regards as nothing less than the continuous revelation of God, the divine Mind, to men, finite minds. This position is summarized in his dictum 'esse est percipi'.

Berkeley does not assert the priority of mind over matter: in his conception matter simply does not exist. The non-existence of matter, however, does not detract from the importance of sense perceptions but rather adds

to them since they acquire the status of language spoken by God to men, an idea he came to regard as almost literally true.³⁸ He rejects the material pole in sense perception, "nature" becoming synonymous with sense perceptions in man's mind which are "ideas" implanted by God. As he puts it in his *Three Dialogues*,³⁹

To me, it is evident ... that sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in a mind or spirit. Whence I conclude, not that they have no real existence, but that seeing they depend not on my thought, and have an existence distinct from being perceived by me, *there must be some other mind wherein they exist*. As sure therefore as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent spirit which contains and supports it.

On the trustworthiness of man's "sensible ideas" Berkeley even builds one of his main arguments for the existence of God,⁴⁰

there is a mind which affects me every moment with all the sensible impressions I perceive. And from the variety, order, and manner of these, I conclude the Author of them to be *wise, powerful, and good, beyond comprehension*.

Berkeley, then, regards sense perceptions as a form of divine revelation, a gift from God, independent of any human activity or projection. "Subjective idealism" is hardly an appropriate term to describe this position; "empirical idealism", if one wants to use a term, seems to do more justice to the basic character of his philosophy.

It could be objected that while the early Berkeley may have held this basically empiricist position, the later Berkeley assumes that the human mind is active in perception, in that it contributes to, or even shapes, the sensory impressions from without. J.H.Muirhead's characterization of the views of the later Berkeley as "*esse est concipi*" is often quoted in this connection.⁴¹ If rightly conceived, "*esse est concipi*" seems a valid enough description of his later position. In *Siris* he pays much attention to the human mind or intellect actively engaged in the ordering of sense perceptions with an eye to establishing their true character and cause.

But this does not mean that his epistemology has fundamentally changed: he still regards man's mind as passive in perception even though he now puts much greater emphasis on the necessity of a subsequent mental, or intellectual reordering of the data of sense in order to arrive at true knowledge. In the following passage from *Siris*, Berkeley tries to define the role of man's mind in relation to sense perceptions, and it should be noted that while his former confidence in God's direct revelation through the senses seems to

have largely disappeared, there is still no mention of a colouring or shaping activity of man in the act of perception,⁴²

As understanding perceiveth not, that is, doth not hear, or see, or feel, so sense knoweth not: and although the mind may use both sense and fancy, as means whereby to arrive at knowledge, yet sense, or soul, so far forth as sensitive, knoweth nothing. For, as it is rightly observed in the *Theætetus* of Plato, science consists not in the passive perceptions, but in the reasoning upon them.

As F. Bender concludes, 'in spite of a shift in the appreciation of the senses in their relation to thought, Berkeley's deepest metaphysical conviction ... has not changed'.⁴³

Both Hartley and Berkeley, then, adhere to an empiricist epistemology. No matter how different their philosophies are in many areas, they are both spokesmen of the same philosophical tradition. Therefore it is not surprising that some points of agreement between them may be recognized. It is to these that the following paragraphs are devoted.

As has been argued, Hartley's system of necessity is thoroughly empiricist. He believes that all human action is determined by external stimuli; in other words, he regards man as an extension or monad of the external world. He combines this rather extreme form of empiricist psychology with the notion that God's energy and power are immanent in external nature. This means that in his view man is a necessary product of the divine will manifested in the external world, 'For, to suppose that Man has a Power independent of God, is to suppose that God's Power does not extend to all Things, i.e. is not infinite'.⁴⁴ To avoid misunderstanding, Hartley also conceives of God as transcendent.

Since man is determined by these divinely impregnated influences from without, there is according to Hartley a strong case for optimism, 'Since all that is done is by the Appointment of God, it cannot but end well at last'.⁴⁵ Thus Hartley combines an empiricist theory of perception with a Christian, or vaguely Neoplatonic conception of divine immanence and concludes that by necessity mankind partakes of a progressive movement towards ever increasing good, towards the ultimate pleasures of what he calls theopathy and moral sense. As R. Haven asserts, 'The world, Hartley argues, reveals the qualities of God, and through the operation of psychological laws, experience of the world undistorted by man-made evils, will necessarily culminate in "theopathy", in "perfect self-annihilation, and the pure love of God"'.⁴⁶

As has already been indicated, a similar combination of empiricism and

Neoplatonism, or Christianity,⁴⁷ can be recognized in Berkeley's philosophy. Although he does not accept the extreme view that man is wholly determined by external impulses, he unequivocally assumes the priority of sense perceptions which he regards as revelations of the divine Mind. On this basis he arrives at an optimism similar to Hartley's, 'All things are made for the supreme good, all things tend to that end: and we may be said to account for a thing when we shew that it is so best'.⁴⁸

It can be concluded that the ideas which Coleridge expressed in 'The Eolian Harp' are not uncommon in eighteenth century English philosophy. Essentially, they are a mixture of an empiricist epistemology and a Neoplatonic conception of God and nature. Thus when Coleridge claims allegiance to both Hartley and Berkeley by referring to them both in one breath as "his men",⁴⁹ this does not indicate philosophical confusion on his part, but he is presenting a justified and apt description of his own views.

Hartley's influence on Coleridge is at its height in the last months of 1794 when he calls himself a 'compleat Necessitarian' and 'an Advocate for the Automatism of Man'.⁵⁰ In the course of 1796 he begins to express doubts concerning the necessitarian elements of Hartley's philosophy and turns to the less extreme form of empiricism as it is embodied in Berkeley's philosophy, which may also have been more congenial to him because of its more outspoken Neoplatonic character. Between 1794 and 1796, then, a gradual change in Coleridge's views can be recognized, but no radical overthrow of his former opinions. His thought remains within the broader framework of empiricist philosophy.

The combination of empiricism and Neoplatonism which characterizes Coleridge's thought around 1796 may have seemed to him to afford a satisfactory basis for, and explanation of, the reverence of nature which he initially derived from tradition. Nevertheless this position gives rise to two problems which were to become increasingly vexing even though in 1796 he still confidently believes to be capable of solving them.

First, the strong emphasis on divine immanence, together with the belief that man is shaped by his sense perceptions, 'raises in an acute form the problem of the existence of evil', as P.M. Adair puts it.⁵¹ If man is surrounded by the images of divine Good and Beauty, and is continuously influenced by these, where does evil come from? A second problem to which Coleridge's position gives rise is already apparent from his insistence on human passivity in relation to nature. Ideally, man should become a passive extension of the

divine forces of nature, and this ideal leaves little room for personal identity and human freedom. As Th. McFarland asserts, 'if God is immanent ... in the world, rather than transcendent ... or essentially separate from the world, man will have no personal identity, but will be only a finite mode of the world-substance that Spinoza calls God'.⁵² As will be seen, the two problems are closely related.

The problem of the existence of evil was not insurmountable, at least in theory. In 'Religious Musings' Coleridge accounts for evil by affirming that envy, want, disease, 'all the sore ills' are 'yet each the immediate source/ Of mightier good' (ll. 215-218), while the origin of evil is explained by man's acquiring of property and richness, which led to envy and avarice, 'So Property began, twy-streaming fount./ Whence Vice and Virtue flow, honey and gall' (ll. 204-205). At this stage of his development, then, Coleridge adopts the optimistic view he had become familiar with through Hartley and Akenside.

In Coleridge's conception of 1796 evil is always due to an active, human interference with the divine impulses of nature. In 'Religious Musings' he writes that if man makes his spirit passive and silent, he will experience in nature 'the ambrosial gales' which spring up 'from the crystal river of life',

The favoured good man in his lonely walk
Perceives them, and his silent spirit drinks
Strange bliss which he shall recognise in heaven. (ll.352-354)

This is elaborated in a passage in which 'the Elect, regenerate through faith' are contrasted with the selfish man whose spirit is drunk up by 'dark Passions and ... thirsty Cares',

As when a shepherd on a vernal morn
Through some thick fog creeps timorous with slow foot,
Darkling he fixes on the immediate road
His downward eye: all else of fairest kind
Hid or deformed. But lo! the bursting Sun!
Touched by the enchantment of that sudden beam
Straight the black vapour melteth, and in globes
Of dewy glitter gems each plant and tree;
On every leaf, on every blade it hangs!
Dance glad the new-born intermingling rays,
And wide around the landscape streams with glory! (ll.94-104)

Self-centred, God-less man is described as walking in a world hidden by mist, in an essentially lifeless world, seeing only what he deems of importance to himself, whereas the man of faith sees a bright world filled with beauty and glory. Since God is 'Nature's essence, mind, and energy' (l. 49), man without

God is alienated from the divine life of nature.

What sort of faith it is that man should have in order to experience the life of nature, appears most clearly from another passage of the same poem which again compares alienated man to the man of faith,

A sordid solitary thing,
Mid countless brethren with a lonely heart
Through courts and cities the smooth savage roams
Feeling himself, his own low self the whole;
When he by sacred sympathy might make
The whole one Self! Self, that no alien knows!
Self, far diffused as Fancy's wing can travel!
Self, spreading still! Oblivious of its own,
Yet all of all possessing! This is Faith!

It becomes clear that faith in this context means the willingness to become oblivious of one's own self, one's interests and thoughts, so that one may be truly one with the divine universe ('The whole one Self'). Basically, then, this faith does not differ significantly from the ideal of passivity discussed above: if man opens himself up to nature, he experiences 'God/ Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole' (ll. 130-131); if he is preoccupied with himself, if his 'dim regards/ Self-centre' (ll. 90-91), nature is to him like a dark mist, like a city through which he is bound to travel alone. It is curious to find in a passage in which the word "self" is repeated so often what amounts to a denial of personal identity.

Thus the solution Coleridge proffers to the problem of evil inevitably leads to the problem of man's personal identity and freedom. Only if man is prepared to suppress his own personal interests and to let himself be guided by the divine power of nature — whatever this may mean in practice — does he fulfil his destiny in that he becomes one with divine Goodness and Love. Personal identity is regarded as an evil to be suppressed, as a cause of alienation from God and nature. This is expressed unambiguously in another passage of 'Religious Musings',

There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind,
Omnific. His most holy name is Love.
Truth of subliming import! with the which
Who feeds and saturates his constant soul,
He from his small particular orbit flies,
With blest outstarting! From himself he flies,
Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
Views all creation; and he loves it all,
And blesses it, and calls it very good!
This is indeed to dwell with the Most High! (ll. 105-114)

Only by flying away from his own self, 'from his small particular orbit', is there any hope for man to be united with 'the plenitude and permanence of bliss' of God's 'Supreme Reality' (ll. 133-134).

It is hardly surprising that in this framework of thought there is little room for human freedom. The following passage from 'The Destiny of Nations' is revealing in this respect,

For what is Freedom, but the unfettered use
Of all the powers which God for use had given?
But chiefly this, him First, him Last to view
Through meaner powers and secondary things
Effulgent, as through clouds that veil his blaze. (ll. 13-17)

In these lines freedom is almost wholly determined by the God who speaks to man through nature. Partly because of its negative description of freedom, the word 'unfettered' suggests that it amounts to no more than a passive obedience to the impulses of God-in-nature without the interference of a conscious personal choice.

Coleridge's conception of freedom at this stage bears a strong resemblance to Hartley's. Hartley distinguishes between philosophical and practical free will. According to him, philosophical free will does not exist since man in any given situation can only act in one way. Nevertheless his imagination, or fancy, suggests that he could have acted otherwise and although this is, strictly speaking, not true, it gives man a semblance of freedom, which he calls practical free will. It will be clear that in Hartley's thought, as in Coleridge's, freedom is mere appearance, not fact. Little wonder that H.N.Fairchild characterizes Hartley's distinction between the two types of free will as 'utterly spurious'.⁵³

This exposition of Coleridge's position as it finds expression in 'The Eolian Harp', 'Religious Musings', and 'The Destiny of Nations' gives rise to one more problem which cannot be passed over. As has been argued, his intention to remain within a Christian framework of thought is not in doubt. Nevertheless, the views which he expounds are remarkably close to pantheism. He believes in the divinity of nature, conceives of God as 'Nature's essence, mind, and energy', propounds an almost Spinozist conception of human identity and freedom, and is on the brink of denying the reality of evil.

Of course, in 'The Eolian Harp' Coleridge ultimately rejects these 'shappings of the unregenerate mind', but the fact that he also presents them in his contemporaneous poetry indicates that, at least, he passed through a phase

in which his attitude bordered on pantheism. Consequently, Gérard's assertion that a 'prudent attitude toward any kind of speculation that might smack of pantheism is a frequent feature of Coleridge's poetry in those early years',⁵⁴ is certainly an overstatement.

Usually, Coleridge's presumed pantheism is attributed to the influence of Priestley whose materialist version of Hartley's philosophy is essentially pantheistic in its implications. It is true that Priestley himself denies this. In *Matter and Spirit*, for instance, he remarks,⁵⁵

Nor indeed, is making the deity to *be*, as well as to do everything, *in this sense* anything like the opinion of Spinoza, because I suppose a source of infinite power and superior intelligence, from which all inferior beings are derived; that every inferior being has a consciousness distinct from that of the supreme being.

But if one realizes that this "distinct consciousness" is wholly determined by God in its actions, it becomes clear that as far as the issue of pantheism is concerned the difference between a Spinozist pantheism and Priestley's "system" is merely verbal.

Coleridge's growing recognition of this fact does not only appear from the final section of 'The Eolian Harp', but also from a statement in a letter of March 1796,⁵⁶

How is it that Dr. Priestley is not an atheist? — He asserts in three different Places, that God not only *does*, but *is*, every thing — But if God *be* every Thing, every Thing is God: which is all the Atheists assert — An eating, drinking, lustful *God* — with no *unity* of *Consciousness* — these appear to me the unavoidable Inferences from his philosophy — Has not Dr. Priestley forgotten that *Incomprehensibility* is as necessary an attribute of the First Cause, as Love, or Power, or Intelligence?

This awareness of the pantheistic implications of Priestley's thought may have been one reason for his subsequent adoption of Berkeley's philosophy.

In *Siris* Berkeley seems to have found a way of reconciling the advantages of pantheism — primarily man's unity with a divinely activated nature — with the existence of a Christian God outside nature by affirming that nature, the material world, in itself does not exist, but that the "sensible ideas" which man calls nature are God's direct and continuous discourse to man. Thus nature can never be God since it simply does not exist outside man's brain (*esse est percipi*); yet it is divine because it originates in, and is from moment to moment sustained by, God's mind. Consequently, one could maintain that *Siris* offered Coleridge exactly what he was looking for: a transcendent God, a divine nature, and a solid basis of contact between man and nature,

and thus through nature with God. On the other hand, *Siris* did not provide him with a solution to the problem of evil significantly different from Hartley's optimism, nor did it afford more than limited scope to human freedom,⁵⁷ so that it would not have inclined him to alter his view that man should be passively receptive to nature.

One more aspect of this problem must be mentioned. It is significant that Coleridge begins his repudiation of Priestley quoted above by wondering, 'How is it that Dr. Priestley is not an *atheist*?' (*italics mine*). It may be concluded from this that Coleridge did not think in terms of a Christianity — pantheism opposition, as is usual nowadays, but in terms of a Christianity — atheism opposition. Since the ideational divergence of Christianity and atheism is much greater than that of Christianity and pantheism, this would mean that he tended to classify moderately pantheistic ideas as Christian, simply because they are closer to Christianity than to atheism. Only more extreme pantheistic positions would be considered as falling outside the semantic field covered by the term Christianity and would thus be designated atheistic. This helps to explain why Coleridge, who sincerely attempted to adhere to a Christian faith, seemed so very tolerant towards conceptions of God and the universe which would nowadays be called pantheistic. More specifically, this implies that what many critics describe as the inconsistency of Coleridge's position at this stage of his development — a profession of the Christian faith and an adoption of pantheistic notions — appeared to him as a conjunction of views that could very well be brought under the general heading of Christianity.

To illustrate that Coleridge was by no means the only professedly Christian thinker who tended to a very lenient attitude to pantheism, it may be noted that in *Siris* Berkeley, the bishop of Cloyne, reveals a similar disposition, as appears from the following statement,⁵⁸

Comprehending God and the creatures in one general notion, we may say that all things together make one universe, or τὸ πᾶν. But if we should say that all things make one God, this would, indeed, be an erroneous notion of God, but would not amount to atheism, so long as mind or intellect was admitted to be τὸ ἡγεμονικόν, the governing part. It is, nevertheless, more respectful, and consequently the truer notion of God, to suppose Him neither made up of parts, nor to be Himself a part of any whole whatsoever.

Although he has his reservations, Berkeley is clearly inclined to accept certain pantheistic ideas within the larger framework of Christianity.

A movement away from a complete identification of God and nature is apparent in 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement' which was probably written in April 1796.⁵⁹ The setting of this poem is similar to that of 'The Eolian Harp'. As it is written in the past tense, it seems like a *post facto* evaluation of the life with Sara and nature he had described in 'The Eolian Harp'. To avoid repetition, only three central passages of this poem will be briefly discussed.

In this poem there are no outspoken pantheistic images, ideas, or implications. It is much more guarded in this respect: the emphasis is clearly on the emotion nature evokes, rather than on its philosophical foundation. After describing the view from the hill in fine detail, for instance, he states the relevance of the experience as follows,

It seem'd like Omnipresence! God, methought,
Had built him there a Temple: the whole World
Was imag'd in its vast circumference:
No *wish* profan'd my overwhelm'd heart.
Blest hour! It was a luxury, — to be!

In the two passages discussed above where Coleridge voices misgivings about the pantheistic turn his thought had taken — the final section of 'The Eolian Harp' and the repudiation of Priestley — he strongly emphasizes the incomprehensibility of God. In line with this, no daring speculations about God's relation to man and nature are found here, although it may be added that, as Gérard puts it, 'the distinction between God and nature, which is basic to Christian orthodoxy, is firmly maintained'.⁶⁰ Coleridge contents himself with describing how it "seemed" to him in an attempt primarily directed at expressing the emotions aroused in him by nature.

The central idea of this passage, that of nature as God's temple or image, Coleridge may have derived from Cudworth, who asserts that some pagan philosophers 'supposed that God was to be worshipped in *All*, or that the whole World was to be worshipped, as his *Image* or *Temple*'.⁶¹ If so, the context in which this statement occurs throws some light on Coleridge's position here. Cudworth is discussing pagan natural theology of which he distinguishes two types 'as to their opinions concerning the Supreme God'. The first type is clearly pantheistic, 'some of them conceiving him to be nothing Higher, than a Mundane Soul' worshipped the world as 'the body of God'. The second type did, however, 'Transcend all the sensible Nature, and thinking God not at all to be seated there, look'd for him, above all Corporeal things' and worshipped the world 'as the Temple or Image of

him'.⁶² This second type of pagan natural theology, not really pantheistic because of its emphasis on transcendence, is comparable to Coleridge's position in this passage.

In these lines it is again implied that man should be passive in his encounter with nature ('profan'd'). This conviction is affirmed unreservedly in the following passage,

Oft with patient ear
Long-listening to the viewless sky-lark's note
...
I've said to my Belovéd, 'Such, sweet Girl!
The inobtrusive song of Happiness,
Unearthly minstrelsy! then only heard
When the Soul seeks to hear; when all is hush'd,
And the Heart listens!'

Besides passivity, these lines indicate once more how important the eighteenth century tradition of nature poetry was to Coleridge; nature as a place of meditation, nature as benevolent and joy-inspiring, nature as vaguely divine, all these traditional notions are present in this extract. No wonder that in the final lines of the poem he associates the simple life in nature he had lived with Sara, with God's kingdom,

And I shall sigh fond wishes — sweet Abode!
Ah! — had *none* greater! And that *all* had such!
It might be so — but the time is not yet.
Speed it, O Father! Let thy Kingdom come!

In the course of 1796 Coleridge's ideas about nature seem to change little from the ones just outlined. In 'To a Young Friend — on his Proposing to Domesticate with the Author', all the familiar associations with nature are expressed once more. Nevertheless, while his thought seems to have reached a temporary stability, his ability to encompass his attitude in verse shows signs of progress. Take the opening lines,

A mount, not wearisome and bare and steep,
But a green mountain variously up-piled,
Where o'er the jutting rocks soft mosses creep,
Or colour'd lichens with slow oozing weep;
Where cypress and the darker yew start wild;
And, 'mid the summer torrent's gentle dash
Dance brighten'd the red clusters of the ash;
Beneath whose boughs, by those stilly sounds beguil'd,
Calm Pensiveness might muse herself to sleep;

A mood of quietness, 'Calm Pensiveness', gentle melancholy, pervades this

fragment; the poet does not merely state this mood, but (re)creates it in his description. The regularity of the metre and the repetition of the rhymes are devices used to make the reader feel nature's tranquillity. The "creeping" of the mosses, the slow oozing of the lichens, the gentle dash of the torrents, the silent sounds of the whole scene: all contribute to this fine description of gentle quietness. In these lines Coleridge accomplishes a unity of form and content, each reinforcing the other.

In another passage of 'To a Young Friend', Coleridge describes nature as 'The Hill of Knowledge' and again he tries to make the reader feel the inspiring force of nature,

Thus rudely vers'd in allegoric lore,
The Hill of Knowledge I essayed to trace;
That verdurous hill with many a resting-place,
And many a stream, whose warbling waters pour
 To glad, and fertilise the subject plains;
That hill with secret springs, and nooks untrod,
And many a fancy-blest and holy sod
 Where Inspiration, his diviner strains
Low-murmuring, lay; ...

Nature is filled with 'allegoric lore', and this is reflected in its description: it is a resting place in which there are singing streams inspiring the poet with joy and the possibility of growth ('fertilise'); nature can show man many aspects of himself he did not know yet, can fill him with knowledge undreamt of before ('secret springs' and 'nooks untrod'). Coleridge seems to be searching for a nature poetry in which nature reinforces the argument of the poem. Or, better perhaps, he attempts to structure his nature descriptions in such a way that they speak to the reader, as nature is said to speak to and inspire the poet.

Finally, I will briefly summarize the findings of this chapter. In the course of 1795 and 1796 Coleridge begins to show a genuine interest in nature. His main endeavour is to find a rational framework of thought as basis and explanation of an attitude to nature which he had originally adopted uncritically on the basis of tradition. This attempt results in a philosophical point of view which can best be characterized as a combination of Neoplatonic and empiricist elements. For a time his views are so close to pantheism that they seem incompatible with Christianity, but later the more outspoken pantheistic tendencies largely disappear. What remains is the basically Neoplatonist conception that man can encounter God in nature, together with the empiricist beliefs in the priority of the senses and the dangers of man's active interference with the influxes of nature.

CHAPTER IV

COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH IN 1797; THEIR INTEREST IN EVIL AND ALIENATION

'When Coleridge arrived at Racedown in June 1797 there is no reason to suppose that he had influenced Wordsworth, or had been influenced by him, to any considerable extent',¹ J. Wordsworth concludes in his detailed study of Wordsworth's poetry of this period. From this time onwards the influence the two poets exerted on each other can be traced, and the issues which must have engaged them deduced, from their poetry. Coleridge's 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' (July, 1797), for instance, presents a critical commentary on Wordsworth's 'Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree' (June, 1797),² while Wordsworth's reaction to 'The Ancient Mariner' may be deduced from 'Peter Bell'.

It falls beyond the scope of this study to examine the development of Wordsworth's nature poetry up to 1797 in detail, but even a cursory glance suffices to indicate the great resemblance between his attitude to nature and Coleridge's. In 'Descriptive Sketches' (1793), for instance, Wordsworth's treatment of nature approximates Coleridge's, revealing similar roots in eighteenth century poetry and philosophy.³

In this poem Wordsworth describes nature as a beneficial influence, as a comforting power associated with joy,⁴

But doubly pitying Nature loves to show'r
Soft on his wounded heart her healing pow'r,

...

No sad vacuities his heart annoy,
Blows not a Zephyr but it whispers joy.

Again, nature is conceived as a teacher of wisdom and virtue to the one who is contemplatively open to its benign influence,⁵

Kind Nature's charities his steps attend,
In every babbling brook he finds a friend,
While chaste'ning thoughts of sweetest use, bestow'd
By Wisdom, moralize his pensive road.

It is clear that Wordsworth here regards nature as an external force exerting its influence independent of any mental projection on man's part. Although before 1797 he does not assert the notion of man's passivity in his confrontation with nature as explicitly as Coleridge,⁶ passivity is unmistakably implied in a passage from 'An Evening Walk' describing nature just after sunset,⁷

No purple prospects now the mind employ
Glowing in golden sunset tints of joy,
But o'er the *sooth'd accordant* heart we feel
A sympathetic twilight slowly *steal*,
And ever, as we fondly muse, we find
The soft gloom deep'ning on the *tranquil* mind. (italics mine)

Like Coleridge, Wordsworth attributes the beneficent forces of nature to its essentially divine character. In the following lines from 'Descriptive Sketches', he describes nature as a place where man may encounter the divine, in terms revealing his indebtedness to Akenside,⁸

For images of other worlds are there,
Awful the light, and holy is the air.
Uncertain thro' his fierce uncultur'd soul
Like lighted tempests troubled transports roll;
To viewless realms his Spirit towers amain,
Beyond the senses and their little reign.
And oft, when pass'd that solemn vision by
He holds with God himself communion high.

Wordsworth, however, also believes that nature's divine influence cannot be felt and experienced by every man: it is only to the virtuous, to those with 'uncorrupted hearts'⁹ that nature speaks. Evil is due to man's active interference with the forces of nature, or, in other words, whatever of evil there is, must proceed from the inside of man. This appears perhaps most clearly from the speech of the evil Oswald in his play *The Borderers* (1796-1797) in which Oswald praises the deluded Marmaduke for his actions and in the process gives an exposition of his own misguided, Godwinian morality,¹⁰

you have shown, and by a signal instance,
How they who would be just must seek the rule
By diving for it into their own bosoms.
...
You have obeyed the only law that sense
Submits to recognize; the immediate law,
From the clear light of circumstances, flashed
Upon an independent Intellect.

Instead of humbly listening to the voice of God in nature, Oswald looks for moral guidance within himself, in his own 'independent Intellect', and thus, estranged from God and nature, becomes thoroughly selfish and evil.

This brief survey may have indicated that Wordsworth's attitude to nature closely resembles Coleridge's views. Moreover, in the months preceding their first prolonged meeting in June both are especially concerned with exploring the negative implications of this attitude as they occur in men who have somehow become evil, in spite of nature's constant, divine presence.

Coleridge develops this theme in *Osorio* (March-October, 1797) in which the protagonist is portrayed as consciously choosing evil when, instigated by his love for Maria, he orders Ferdinand to kill his brother Albert. It is hardly surprising to find that the evil *Osorio* is seriously misguided in his attitude to nature as is borne out by his reaction to Albert's collection of plants and herbs,¹¹

All very curious! from a ruin'd abbey
Pluck'd in the moonlight. There's a strange power in weeds
When a few odd prayers have been mutter'd o'er them.
Then they work miracles! I warrant you,
There's not a leaf, but underneath it lurks
Some serviceable imp.

Though *Osorio* recognizes the living, healing powers of nature, he shows the measure of his estrangement by thinking of nature only in pragmatic terms, as a force which could be useful to his own selfish purposes. Estrangement from nature seems a necessary precondition for the emergence of evil. When later in the play *Osorio* in the third person describes the process which finally led to his decision to kill his brother, it is noteworthy that the inspiration comes wholly from within,¹²

He walk'd alone,
And phantasies, unsought for, troubled him.
Something within would still be shadowing out
All possibilities, and with these shadows
His mind held dalliance. Once, as so it happen'd,
A fancy cross'd him wilder than the rest:
To this in moody murmur, and low voice,
He yielded utterance as some talk in sleep.

...

With his human hand
He gave a being and reality
To that wild fancy of a possible thing.

In this speech *Osorio* regards himself as the victim of his own fantasies,

just as Oswald in *The Borderers* became a victim of the rule of conduct which he found by "diving for it into his own bosom".

But more is hinted at in Osorio's account. The evil thoughts that well up in his heart are described as 'shadowing out', indicating the mind's ability to project its deluded fancies on to the external world. This strange power of man to influence the world around him, changing it from the language spoken by God to his senses into an extension of his own state of mind, is not only found in this speech, but is alluded to a number of times in *Osorio*. One of the Moors, for instance, describes Alhadra, overcome with grief after the murder of her husband, as follows,¹³

She moved steadily on
Unswerving from the path of her resolve.
Yet each strange object fix'd her eye: for grief
Doth love to dally with fantastic shapes,
And smiling, like a sickly moralist,
Gives some resemblance of her own concerns
To the straws of chance, and things inanimate.

The extent to which Coleridge's and Wordsworth's minds must have run along similar lines can be inferred from the fact that in *The Borderers* Wordsworth also refers to this faculty of man to perceive in nature that which is not there. In the following lines a forester describes the guilt-ridden Marmaduke after his discovery of Oswald's deceit which had induced him to perpetrate a crime,¹⁴

His senses play him false; and see, his arms
Outspread, as if to save himself from falling! —
Some terrible phantom I believe is now
Passing before him, such as God will not
Permit to visit any but a man
Who has been guilty of some horrid crime.

It appears, then, that both poets were highly suspicious of the inner powers of man at this time: they tend to mislead, they prevent man from receiving nature's ministry and ultimately induce alienation from nature and God. This is in line with Hartley's statement that 'if we become quite inattentive to external Objects, the Reverie does so far put on the Nature of a Dream, as to appear Reality'.¹⁵

All through 1797 Wordsworth's poetry attests to his overriding interest in those states of mind, ranging from despondency to madness, which make man incapable of benefiting from nature's influence; to such an extent even that it sometimes seems as if nature is powerless to comfort or instruct men

who through grief or guilt have become preoccupied with their own concerns. As he asserts in 'Incipient Madness' (1797),¹⁶

There is a mood
A settled temper of the heart, when grief,
Become an instinct, fastening on all things
That promise food, doth like a sucking babe
Create it where it is not.

Similar ideas are expressed in contemporaneous poems like 'The Reverie of Poor Susan', 'The Ruined Cottage', and 'Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree'.

The latter two poems are of special interest since Coleridge was familiar with them. In 'The Ruined Cottage' Margaret gradually collapses under the weight of her grief after the departure of her husband even though she lives in the continual presence of nature. Her growing self-absorption and alienation are mirrored in her increasing neglect of the garden around her cottage suggestive of a connection between her mental decline and the waning of her interest in nature.

A similar point is more explicitly made in 'Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree' in which a man — initially 'by genius nurs'd', 'big with lofty views', 'pure in his heart' — becomes disillusioned with the — probably urban — world of jealousy, hate, and scorn which appears impervious to his high-minded ideals. His disillusionment impels him to feel proud disdain of the world and he retires into a state of mind in which 'the food of pride sustained his soul/ In solitude'. In this state of 'self-absorbed retirement',¹⁷ he actually experiences the beauty of nature which is nevertheless unable to comfort or change him. This is affirmed quite unambiguously,¹⁸

And, lifting up his head, he then would gaze
On the more distant scene, — how lovely 'tis
Thou seest, — and he would gaze till it became
Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain
The beauty, still more beauteous! Nor, that time,
When nature had subdued him to herself,
Would he forget those Beings to whose minds
Warm from the labours of benevolence
The world, and human life, appeared a scene
Of kindred loveliness: then he would sigh,
Inly disturbed, to think that others felt
What he must never feel: and so, lost Man!
On visionary views would fancy feed,
Till his eye stream'd with tears. In this deep vale
He died, — this seat his only monument.

This man is not only surrounded by nature, but is even to some extent susceptible to nature's gentle ministrations ('nature had subdued him to herself'). Yet this recognition of the beauty of nature does not give rise to a change of heart.

Although Wordsworth concludes the poem with a moralizing condemnation of this man's pride, stressing the necessity of living in 'Lowliness of heart', it is clear that in this poem the power of nature to incline man to virtue and happiness is seriously questioned. Not that Wordsworth here casts doubt upon the essential qualities of nature he had asserted in his previous poetry — its origin in the divine, its beauty, its role as a teacher, and so on — but it seems to be completely up to man whether he wants to benefit from them or not. To put it very plainly, Wordsworth implies that nature is incapable of "converting" any man unless he wants to be "converted".

Coleridge seems to have taken exception to this rather negative estimation of the natural force. As a reaction to Wordsworth's poem he wrote 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' which presents an affirmation of nature's benevolent sovereignty over man.¹⁹ At the beginning of this poem Coleridge puts himself in a position comparable to the protagonist in Wordsworth's poem: because of his dejection he feels alienated from nature. This is expressed in rather strong terms,

Well, they are gone, and here I must remain,
Lam'd by the scathe of fire, lonely and faint,
This lime-tree bower my prison!

Very emphatically Coleridge asserts that his state of mind renders him insensible to nature as a positive force; nature, indeed, seems like a prison to him.

Although he does not experience the beneficent qualities of nature, however, he does not doubt their presence: he knows that his friends, Charles Lamb and the Wordsworths, do feel the joys of nature. By envisaging in his mind their enjoyment of nature, and by gradually realizing the beauty of the lime-tree bower around him, he becomes receptive of nature's influence again, resulting in an exultant celebration of the healing powers of nature,

Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No scene so narrow but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty!

In these lines the emphasis is quite clearly on the activity of nature towards man. Coleridge does not state that *he* — through his imagination or faith in

nature — has re-established contact, but exactly the opposite, that nature has been working on him. As M. Suther puts it, 'Man's contribution to the total experience, important as it is, is negative: by being wise and pure, he prepares himself to receive the message of Nature, to be quickened by its contact'.²⁰ Wordsworth had implied that even if someone recognizes nature's beauty, he may still be unaffected by it because of his pride, dejection, or guilt, whereas Coleridge seems convinced that nature is capable of liberating man from his self-imposed prison and lead him to joy.

The ascendant movement from dejection and self-pity to a felt encounter with the joys of nature which characterizes the first person narrative of the poem, is paralleled by the imagined experiences of his friends during their walk. It is not accidental that Coleridge directs his attention especially to Charles Lamb who must have appeared to him and the Wordsworths as sharing many characteristics with the protagonist of 'Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree',

But chiefly thou,
My gentle-hearted *Charles*! thou who had pin'd
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet bowed soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity!

Charles Lamb had just gone through a very difficult period of his life. First he had been confined in a mental hospital since, as he wrote to Coleridge, 'mad I was — and many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume if all told',²¹ while about half a year later his sister killed his mother in a fit of insanity. Besides, he had lived in London where he had 'not one truly elevated character among my acquaintance'.²²

Even Charles Lamb will experience the divine power of nature, when he

Struck with joy's deepest calm, and gazing round
On the wide view, may gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; a living thing
That acts upon the mind, and with such hues
As clothe th' Almighty Spirit, when he *makes*
Spirits perceive his presence. (italics mine)

As the italicized phrases indicate, Coleridge here again asserts his conception of nature as an external power acting on man. This natural force can even incline someone who has experienced such great calamity and misery as Charles Lamb, to joy and a recognition of God in nature. The imagined journey of the friends, then, shows an ascendant movement from Charles' alienation from nature in the city to his encounter with the divine in nature.

This movement is reflected in the landscape: first the friends look down into 'the rifted dell' while at the end they view nature from the top of a hill.²³

This passage has given rise to much critical debate as to which philosophical position is being expressed in it. Still, the attitude Coleridge adopts here does not differ significantly from the one outlined towards the end of the previous chapter. Nature is described as an active force associated with joy, as a revelation of the divine Spirit to the human spirit, all pantheistic overtones having now disappeared. If anything, it is more clearly Berkeleyan than anything Coleridge had written before.²⁴

The poem, then, comprises two narrative lines, one centering on Coleridge, one on his friends. Since they run parallel, they reinforce each other. As A.R. Jones states, 'just as Lamb and his friends in this imaginary journey find their way out of the dell into the "wide, wide Heaven", that is also the "wide landscape" where they sense the presence of the "Almighty Spirit", so Coleridge feels himself to be released from his prison, and experiences a parallel ascent which culminates in his blessing the home-bound rook'.²⁵ It is a measure of the poem's artistry that at its end these two narrative lines are brought together in the image of the rook which Coleridge imagines to have come as a messenger from his friend, 'deeming' it

Flew creaking o'er your heads, and had a charm
For you my Sister and my Friends, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

'No scene so narrow' but it speaks to man, Coleridge had written a few lines before. In these lines he illustrates this statement: a rook, traditionally noted for its "gothic" associations, tells both the poet and his friends of the life of nature, and thus embodies the one conclusion to the two narrative lines, a confident assertion of the life-giving qualities of even the apparently most unpropitious parts of nature.²⁶

The preceding account may have indicated the fundamental agreement between Coleridge's and Wordsworth's views on nature when they met in July 1797. Both had initially adopted the assumptions of the eighteenth century tradition rather uncritically and in the year preceding their meeting both had come to recognize a grave problem to which this traditional conception of nature gives rise. Although they had probably hardly influenced each other before this meeting, both had reached a stage in their development at which they were trying to cope with the problem of evil, the problem that in spite of their confident belief in the healing powers of nature, so few people seemed actually healed, spiritually or morally, by its influence. Both

tended to regard man's mental activity as the cause of his alienation from the life of nature, implying a negative estimation of the imagination which could interfere with nature's salutary influence, and ultimately induce man to evil. As J.B. Beer summarizes it, 'A theory of the origin and nature of evil is thus produced, which is both comprehensive and psychological. God has not changed; but man ... has deprived himself of the true vision of God, and thus entangled himself in a situation which constantly defeats his hardest efforts to do good. His inability to understand the true nature of the world in which he lives is responsible both for his evil-doing, and for his fear of the very forces which, rightly understood, would lead him to good'.²⁷

Coleridge's reaction to Wordsworth's 'Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree' suggests that during their conversations the poets must have discussed these issues. 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Peter Bell' indicate that with 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' the discussion was by no means ended. And this is hardly surprising since the affirmation of the irresistible power of nature in the latter poem is not really convincing. In his fine discussion of the poem, K. Everest notes that 'The climax of the poem claims an external divinity in nature that constitutes the highest form of experience, but that knowledge is arrived at through a process that throws the emphasis onto the creative power of the mind itself'.²⁸ In its own terms this statement is justified: the *imagined* journey of the friends plays a decisive role in the movement towards the final recognition of nature's power. While ostensibly asserting the external influence of nature on man, it is through the activity of Coleridge's mind that this realization of nature's sovereignty is finally reached.

The double-edgedness of the poem in this respect appears most clearly in the following lines,

and sometimes
 'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
 That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
 With lively joy the joys we cannot share.

The phrase 'That we may lift the soul' reveals the unresolved tension behind the poet's apparent confidence in nature. In terms of the poem, the phrase can only be interpreted as a lifting of the soul towards an open and essentially passive receptivity of the forces of nature, but the very phrase 'lift the soul' implies, strangely enough, an emphasis on the inner activity of man which is difficult to reconcile with it. In the final analysis it appears that this poem which should have been an unequivocal defence of nature's power over man, is clearly ambiguous at exactly this point, revealing basically the same uncer-

tainty as Wordsworth's 'Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree'. In the discussion of 'The Ancient Mariner' in the next chapter, this uncertainty will be dealt with at greater length.

CHAPTER V

ALIENATION RECONSIDERED: 'THE ANCIENT MARINER'

At first sight another discussion of 'The Ancient Mariner' may seem rather superfluous since so many penetrating and detailed analyses of it have already been offered. However, since the poem records a key phase in the development of Coleridge's attitude to nature, it cannot be passed over. Another justification of this chapter is that an interpretation which is primarily concerned with an investigation of the attitude to nature the poem embodies, runs counter to received critical practice. Many critics have tended to interpret the poem in moral terms along lines broadly indicated by Adair's statement that '*The Ancient Mariner* is concerned with the existence of evil, the spiritual aridity which follows it, and the eternal wandering of the soul which is only partially redeemed'.¹ In contrast, I will argue that the primary significance of the poem is not of a moral character, but epistemological in that it deals with an exploration of the implications of Coleridge's attitude to the relation between man and nature, as it has been outlined in the previous chapters of this study.

Before presenting my own case, I will indicate briefly some of the more influential approaches to the poem. R.P. Warren's famous essay, 'A Poem of Pure Imagination: an Experiment in Reading' may serve as an example of the more optimistic moral interpretations of the poem. He argues that the poem essentially tells 'a story of crime and punishment and repentance and reconciliation'² and he characterizes its primary theme as 'the theme of sacramental vision, or the theme of the "One Life"'.³ In his conception the shooting of the albatross 're-enacts the Fall'⁴ in that it is 'symbolically, a murder, and a particularly heinous murder, for it involves the violation of hospitality and of gratitude ... and of sanctity'.⁵ For this murder the mariner is subsequently punished, after which a process of reconciliation is set in motion culminating in the mariner's recognition of the 'one Life'. As Warren puts it, 'In the end, he accepts the sacramental view of the universe, and his will is released from its state of "utmost abstraction" and gains the state of "immanence" in wisdom and love',⁶ which means that the mariner has become a 'prophet of universal charity'.⁷

At first sight an interpretation like Warren's seems attractive, but a closer inspection reveals a number of difficulties. First, the analysis of Coleridge's development up to the time he wrote 'The Ancient Mariner' suggests that by 1797 the idea of the 'one Life', of a regenerative interchange between man and nature, was still far from his mind.⁸ Besides, if the poem is read as an affirmation of this idea, one cannot but conclude that Coleridge presented his case rather weakly, since nowhere does one find the tone of exultant celebration one would expect in such a poem.

E.E. Bostetter raises other objections to Warren's interpretation. He argues that the mariner's punishment is out of all proportion to his crime, which is, after all, no more than the shooting of an albatross. He emphasizes the haunting, almost irrational quality of the poem as it is exemplified, for instance, in the death of the more or less innocent crew, the moral conception of which he calls 'primitive and savage — utterly arbitrary in its ruthlessness'.⁹ From his point of view the poem presents 'a deadly serious exaggeration of the remorseless series of consequences set in motion by a casual violation of the harmony of nature',¹⁰ or, as he puts it elsewhere, a dramatization 'of the psychological hell implicit in the doctrine of necessity'.¹¹ Instead of a 'prophet of universal charity', he refers to the mariner at the end of the poem as 'eternally alienated'.¹²

Bostetter points to elements in the poem which are difficult to reconcile with Warren's interpretation. By the same token, however, his conception of the mariner's universe as basically chaotic and irrational is hardly supported by the Christian imagery and the moral presented at the end of the poem. Moreover, it is hardly conceivable that the Coleridge who wrote 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' and 'Frost at Midnight' during roughly the same period, would in 'The Ancient Mariner' propose a view of God and nature almost diametrically opposed to the one expressed in these poems.

Both Warren and Bostetter have attempted to come up with a consistent and comprehensive reading of the poem in moral terms. Both interpretations are supported by some sections of the poem, yet fail to account for others. Since the two interpretations are mutually exclusive, this gives rise to doubt concerning the feasibility of a moral approach to the poem.

But there is more. If one believes with Warren that the poem describes an ordered, just, and ultimately benevolent universe, one can hardly avoid the vexing problem of the significance of its natural and supernatural imagery. Warren tries to impose a consistent pattern of symbolism on the imagery, but, as has been shown repeatedly by others,¹³ his attempt does not really

succeed. Warren's excellent failure in this respect has made other critics wary of proposing a comprehensive interpretation of the poem's imagery. But the stakes are high: if the imagery is inconsistent or arbitrary, it must be concluded that the mariner's universe, described in terms of this imagery, is to some extent arbitrary and without order. No wonder that critics have continued the attempt to find a satisfactory symbolic pattern in the imagery.

Such an attempt was, for instance, made by J.B. Beer. But in spite of the light he sheds on many aspects of the poem, the symbolic significance of the images he proposes is often too vague to be helpful. The albatross, for example, he describes as 'a symbol both of physical and transcendental life, both sides receiving their appropriate weight',¹⁴ and he concludes his discussion with the statement that 'many of the supernatural touches in the poem are there simply from delight in their vividness',¹⁵ which is as much as to say that there are aspects of the poem that have not been accounted for. In this respect it is interesting to note that in a later publication Beer seems to have had second thoughts about his moral interpretation and presents a reading which moves away from moral, towards epistemological or psychological concerns.¹⁶

Up till now, no comprehensive interpretation has been offered which has not been justly challenged. Approached from a moral point of view, the poem either incorporates inconsistent or, at best, superfluous imagery, or runs counter to the beliefs Coleridge ostensibly adhered to. Besides, the two types of interpretation that have been offered, which have been roughly indicated as Warren's and Bostetter's, are difficult to reconcile: in the one view one is confronted with a universe in which there is order and justice, a divinity that shapes man's life, its punishments and its ultimate happiness, while in the other view the universe is chaotic, patently unjust, ruled by chance with, if at all, a terrible God of wrath.

An alternative to the moral approach is to consider the poem as a dream or nightmare, whose relation to the "real" world is at best indeterminate. This means that the poem is thought to describe the mariner's dream-world, the morality of which exists primarily in his psyche. J.L. Lowes already suggested such an approach when he stated, 'It is not a didactic poem in that it teaches us ethical principles about *our* world; if the Mariner had shot a human being this would have been different'.¹⁷ Thus the poem is regarded as another journey into man's heart of darkness, 'to the limits of consciousness, where the boundaries of subject and object are fluid'.¹⁸

Although this line of approach seems more promising than the moral

one, two reservations should be made. Firstly, the imagery seems to imply a concern with the interplay of "inner" and "outer", with the relation between mind and external reality, man and the world. An approach in which this relation is blurred does not do justice to the poem. Most readers feel that something very basic is being said about the world they live in; as H. House phrases it, 'Through the development of the imagery we are gradually led into the realisation that the values of "the land of mist and snow" are of the greatest possible concern, but that they are indescribable'.¹⁹ To consider the poem as a dream may remove certain difficulties in it, yet at the same time stands in danger of missing its point.

Secondly, even if one regards the mariner's world of fear and arbitrary forces as a dream, one is still left with the problem of how to relate this world to the world Coleridge professedly believed in and which he expressed in his contemporaneous poetry. Usually this difficulty is resolved by assuming that Coleridge's experience contradicted what he wanted to believe in, by affirming a clash between theory and practice: 'What he wanted to believe in and increasingly devoted his intellectual energies to asserting was a universe of order and benevolence in which man possessed freedom of will and action to mold his own destiny; what he feared was a universe in which he was at the mercy of arbitrary and unpredictable forces'.²⁰ Yet the very incompatibility of these two attitudes would almost compel one to conclude that during the period in which his best poetry was written Coleridge was a split personality, something which can only be accepted as a last resort.

In this chapter yet another option will be suggested. It will be argued that Coleridge's preoccupation with man's relation to nature, with the difficulties inherent in his notion of nature's life-giving activity and man's passive receptivity, is also the poet's main concern in 'The Ancient Mariner'.

It may be best to recall briefly the stage of development Coleridge's thought had reached when he wrote 'The Ancient Mariner'. At this time he did not question the benevolent, divine character of the external world. He believed that if man is open to nature's influence, he will come to recognize God in nature resulting in virtue, happiness, and a true understanding of the world and its beauty. Of decisive importance is the conditional clause, 'if man is open to nature's influence': nature is the language God speaks to man, but it is up to man whether he is willing to listen to it or not.

Man can also shut himself off from nature's influence, consciously like the protagonist of Wordsworth's 'Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree',

or unconsciously, through grief or guilt, like Margaret in 'The Ruined Cottage', or Osorio. As Coleridge had already affirmed in 1796, man is capable of 'Untenanted creation of its God',²¹ so that instead of 'a vision shadowy of Truth', he sees 'vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,/ Shapes of a dream'.²² If man is blind to the presence of divine light in nature, he is left with his own self-imposed darkness which he in turn projects on nature so that he becomes 'A sordid solitary thing ... / Feeling himself, his own low self the whole',²³ surrounded by a nature that is no more than an extension of his own mind, his own dejection or fear.

In 'The Ancient Mariner' Coleridge tried to face the implications of this reverse side of his faith in nature, tried to describe the causes and consequences of man's alienation from nature and God. If this is accepted, it will appear that the poem has its proper place in the development of Coleridge's thought and does not contradict his statements in the apparently more optimistic poems he wrote at the same time.

In the discussion of *Osorio* in the previous chapter, Osorio was quoted as asserting man's ability to impose his own thoughts on nature in such a way that to him these shadows of his own mind appear like reality. This was related to Hartley's statement that 'if we become quite inattentive to external Objects, the Reverie does so far put on the Nature of a Dream, as to appear Reality'.²⁴ Besides in Hartley, there are other places in which Coleridge may have encountered the idea that man is capable of changing the appearance of the external world into an extension of his own mind.

To begin with, chapter 17 of *The Wisdom of Solomon* seems highly pertinent to 'The Ancient Mariner'. It must be admitted that it is not certain that Coleridge was familiar with this chapter. But a number of 1796 entries in his notebooks attests to a rather extensive reading of the *Apocrypha* and, besides, passages in 'Religious Musings' and 'The Destiny of Nations' resemble the language in which this chapter is couched, so that it is not impossible that Coleridge was acquainted with it.²⁵ However this may be, the chapter is relevant to the ideational background of the poem.

This chapter describes at length the attitude to nature of the vain Egyptians who 'from the good things that are seen ... gained not the power to know him that is, Neither by giving heed to the works did they recognise the artificer'(13:1). Alienation from God and alienation from nature are here regarded as different sides of the same coin, the one inevitably suggesting the other. Chapter 17 records the extent to which these Egyptians recreated the world in their own image. Though the whole chapter is relevant, only a

few characteristic passages can be quoted,²⁶

For neither did the dark recesses that held them guard them from fears,
But sounds rushing down rang around them,
And phantoms appeared, cheerless with unsmiling faces.
And no force of fire prevailed to give *them* light.
Neither were the brightest flames of stars strong enough to illumine that
gloomy night:
But only there appeared to them the glimmering of a fire self-kindled, full
of fear;
And in terror they deemed the things which they saw
To be worse than that sight, on which they could not gaze.

...
For even if no troublous thing affrighted them,
Yet, scared with the creepings of vermin and hissings of serpents, they
perished for very trembling,
Refusing even to look on the air, which could on no side be escaped.

...
Whether there were a whistling wind,
Or a melodious noise of birds among the spreading branches,
Or a measured fall of water running violently, ...
All these things paralysed them with terror.
For the world *beside* was enlightened with clear light,
And was occupied with unhindered works;
While over them alone was spread a heavy night,
An image of the darkness that should afterward receive them;
But yet heavier than darkness were they unto themselves.

Instead of a joyful revelation of the divine, these men see in nature nothing but the products of their 'ludicrous fearfulness' which in turn is caused by their wickedness.²⁷ The similarity of the ideas expressed in this chapter and Coleridge's thought in 1797 is striking.

Whether Coleridge read *The Wisdom of Solomon* or not, a passage to the same effect is found in Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* with which he was certainly acquainted. In this passage, too long to be quoted in full, Cudworth discusses the origin of a superstitious belief in 'Invisible Powers, Ghosts, and Gods' which is, according to him, due to 'mens mistaking their own Phancies for Things Really existing without them',²⁸

For as in the sense of Vision, men are commonly deceived, in supposing the Image behind the Glass to be a Real thing existing without themselves, whereas it is indeed nothing but their own Phancy; In like manner when the Minds of Men strongly possess'd with Fear, especially in the Dark, raise up the Phantasms of Spectres, Bug-bears, or Affrightful Apparitions to them, they think them to be Objects really existing without them, and call

them Ghosts and Spirits, whilst they are indeed nothing but their own Phancies; So the Phantasm or Phancy of a Deity (which is indeed the Chief of all Spectres) created by Fear, has upon no other Accompt, been taken for a Reality. To this purpose a Modern Writer, "From the Fear that proceeds from the Ignorance it self, of what it is that hath the Power to do men Good or Harm, men are inclined to suppose and Feign to themselves, several kinds of Powers Invisible, and to stand in awe of their own Imaginations, and in time of Distress to invoke them, as also in the time of an expected good Success, to give them thanks, making the Creatures of their own Fancies, their Gods".

Also this passage expresses the belief that man is capable of peopling the world around him with phantoms of his own imagination. These phantoms are associated with fear, alienation, and evil.²⁹ To the 'wise and pure' man nature is a revelation of divine benevolence, but only as long as he suppresses his own thoughts and feelings, as long as he does not become one of those 'enfeebled hearts/ Whom Fancy chills with visionary fears', Akenside writes about.³⁰

'The Ancient Mariner' is Coleridge's first attempt to explore the alienating power of the imagination in depth. In the light of his development and the passages quoted, it is likely that the horrors of the mariner's world are due, not to a malignant power in nature itself since this would be in direct contradiction to Coleridge's conception of the divine in nature, but to the alienated mariner's self-projections which he fails to recognize as such. Thus the poem may be said to describe the mariner's "dream". Not his personal dream, however, but the dream all those who fail to perceive God's presence in nature are doomed to experience as reality. This is supported by de Quincey's assertion that Coleridge planned to write 'a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream-scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes'.³¹

If this is indeed the thematic centre of the poem, the role of the mariner must be one of *exemplum* of alienated men who 'Untenanted creation of its God' enter their self-created world of fear and darkness. Most critics tend to agree with Wordsworth's stricture that the mariner 'does not act, but is continually acted upon',³² and with Lamb's statement to the same effect, that he is like man in a bad dream to whom 'all consciousness of personality is gone'.³³ As Beer puts it, there is a 'lack of positive motivation in the mariner's actions'.³⁴ The mariner, then, is not presented as having a fully developed individual personality, but rather as a type who enacts the fate of every alienated man. Therefore I cannot but disagree with those critics who claim that in the poem Coleridge endeavoured to encompass his own

psychological situation, his own feelings of suffering, dread, and remorse.³⁵

In fact, it appears that the poem creates a vast difference between the poet and the mariner. In the first place, a distance in time is established since, as G. Watson has shown, the mariner is a sailor living around 1500.³⁶ Secondly, his Mariolatry or, more generally, his superstitious nature seems to preclude all identification of the mariner with Coleridge. Whether there is some autobiographical basis of the poem or not, it is clear that Coleridge's main concern lies elsewhere: the experience of the mariner serves as an *exemplum* of the fate of every man who has lost touch with divine reality.

Since the mariner functions as an example of what happens to alienated men, special attention should be paid to his attitude to nature, since in this attitude there must be something basically wrong. In this respect, there occurs a revealing passage when the mariner is confronted with his self-imposed nightmare world. The approach of the spectre-bark is described as follows,³⁷

The western wave was all a-flame,
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun. (ll. 171-176)

This would seem an appropriate image of what is happening: the phantom world of the mariner interposes itself between him and the light of nature, preventing him from seeing nature as it really is. Yet it is significant how this "event" is interpreted by the mariner in the next stanza,

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face. (ll. 177-180)

One would expect the mariner to describe the "event" as if *he* were looking through the phantom at the sun, but in actual fact he states exactly the reverse: *the sun*, not *he*, is peering through the phantom, the implication being that the sun, not *he*, is imprisoned in the dungeon.

From this it follows that the mariner puts himself squarely in the centre of the universe. The sun is peering at him; the sun, if anything, is in a dungeon. Besides, it appears that the mariner takes what he sees very literally: what he sees is by definition there, and the idea that it might to some extent be the product of his own tormented self does not occur to him. In other words, he has a very simple, unreflective way of perceiving the external world. He

lacks the sophistication to analyse, to take distance from his sense perceptions, and consequently he regards nature as being cruel to him, instead of he being cruel or deaf to nature, which would be a better assessment of his situation.³⁸

The mariner believes in the objective existence of what he sees and thus his sense perceptions become the norm of reality, so that he never becomes self-reflective, looking for the cause of the phantom world in his own deluded mind. In terms of this stanza, nature is imprisoned since that is what he literally sees without the idea even occurring to him that he might be imprisoned. *He* believes what *he* sees and since *he* does not see God in nature, God is not there. He himself has in a roundabout way become the criterion of reality, first rejecting God's presence in nature and then literally believing in this God-less universe, becoming, as Coleridge affirmed of atheists, 'An outcast of blind Nature ruled by a fatal Necessity — Slave of an idiot Nature!'.³⁹ It is interesting to note that in 'The Wanderings of Cain', which in its preface Coleridge expressly connects with 'The Ancient Mariner', Cain's fall is attributed to the fact that he 'neglected to make a proper use of his senses'.⁴⁰ This could equally be applied to the mariner's predicament.

The mariner's almost primitive trust in his sense perceptions is fundamental to the poem, since, in P. Magnuson's words, 'Whatever we see of the mariner's world, we see through the mariner's eyes'.⁴¹ In one of the autobiographical letters to Poole, Coleridge discusses this literal way of perceiving the world, which is, as has been argued, the mariner's way of seeing. After writing the often misunderstood phrase, 'I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief', which expresses Coleridge's rejection of taking one's sense impressions literally, he goes on to describe the 'experimentalists' who view reality in this way,⁴²

are not the experimentalists credulous even to madness in believing any absurdity, rather than believe the grandest truths, if they have not the testimony of their senses in their favour? I have known some who have been *rationaly* educated, as it is styled. They were marked by a microscopic acuteness, but when they looked at great things, all became a blank and they saw nothing, and denied (very illogically) that anything could be seen, and uniformly put the negation of a power for the possession of a power, and called the want of imagination judgment and the never being moved to rapture philosophy!

Coleridge here asserts that trust in one's sense perceptions leads to a distorted view of reality, to an inability to see the whole of nature as it really is, 'the universe to them is but a mass of *little things*', as he puts it in the same letter. If man's sense perceptions become the standard of truth, the existence of

anything beyond mere appearance will inevitably be denied leaving only the material world of things. In this way man may become incapable of recognizing the immaterial, divine forces operating in nature so that he is left with a cold, lifeless world of isolated phenomena. Faced with this inhuman world, man will become frightened of it and start peopling it with the phantasms of his own fear.

Because of the mariner's thoughtless reliance on his sense perceptions, he is by his very nature an unreliable narrator, the cause of his unreliability being at the same time the cause of his alienation. In the poem he presents his tale, his *post facto* interpretation of what he thinks he has seen and experienced, in the conviction that the unconscious projections of his frightened imagination had an objective existence in the external world.

But the reader is not submerged into a world of total subjectivity. The existence of the "real" world, the beneficial, divine world, can be recognized throughout the poem. Although the mariner imposes his own fears on nature — on the sun, the moon, and the sea — it is continuously present as a potentially divine force if only he could perceive it as such.⁴³ In the following section an attempt will be made to indicate what an interpretation of the poem on the basis of these assumptions might look like.

The journey starts off happily enough, the ship being cheered and the crew merry. Beer has aptly described the mariner and his crew at the beginning of the journey: they are like innocent men, who 'never having been forced to face the extremes of human experience which might give them a sense beyond their immediate concerns, ... are content to rest in immediate pleasures'.⁴⁴ The happiness of these men living 'in what appears to them to be a pleasant, well-ordered universe'⁴⁵ is precarious because it is essentially unconscious or superficial, 'If ... they are faced by natural or moral disasters, they will have no equipment with which to meet them'.⁴⁶

Small wonder, then, that the gaiety of the parting is short-lived. When the storm takes the ship to the unknown ice-scape of the Antarctic, their cheerfulness is immediately supplanted by fear. These alien surroundings are experienced as a threatening force, the ice 'cracked and growled, and roared and howled' (l. 61). As L. Brisman comments, 'far from a sense of voice, of higher spirit interfusing a lower hemisphere with the breath of the Word, this world is marked with the meaningless sounds of matter chafing against matter'.⁴⁷ Because the mariner has never recognized the presence of God in nature, he is utterly defenceless in this situation. A nature wholly different from nature as he had superficially supposed it to be in his merry

life before the trip, a nature with 'Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken' (l. 57), shatters his complacent cheerfulness. Since many critics regard the nightmare world of the mariner as a punishment for his shooting of the albatross, it should be noted that already before this act nature is experienced as frightening, which implies that the whole notion of fall and subsequent punishment is not applicable in this case.

Then the albatross appears as a sign of life in this cold and lifeless world of ice, 'At length did cross an Albatross,/ Thorough the fog it came' (ll. 63-64). As in 'Religious Musings' the fog reflects the mariner's imperfect vision, his lack of understanding of nature.⁴⁸ The frightened mariner regards the bird as a ray of hope, a sign of life. The mariner's fancy turns the albatross into a saving power which could lead him out of this God-less world, a simple bird becoming the surrogate of the real life of nature. That it is the mariner's superstitious fancy which turns the bird into an image of salvation is suggested by the lines, 'And every day, for food or play,/ Came to the mariner's hollo!' (ll. 73-74; italics mine). This promise of light is literally fed by the mariner and it comes at his call.

Coleridge had already previously been concerned with the role of superstition in man's encounter with nature. In the first of his lectures on Revealed Religion (1795), he presents an allegory of Superstition, Religion and Atheism, which is significant in this respect. When the protagonist enters the valley of life he sees 'a large and gloomy pile into which I seemed constrained to enter'; this appears to be the temple of Superstition. In this way Coleridge points out that man in his first encounter with nature or life is tempted by superstition. This temple has stained glass windows depicting in 'inelegant and glaring colours some horrible tale or preternatural action', so that 'not a ray of light could enter untinged'. Superstition, then, occasions a corrupted view of nature which is 'coloured' and deformed by it. The allegory implies that superstition not only distorts nature, but also man's reason.⁴⁹

A similar weight is carried by a passage from 'The Destiny of Nations',

For Fancy is the power
That first unsensualises the dark mind,
Giving it new delights; and bids it swell
With wild activity; and peopling air,
By obscure fears of Beings invisible,
Emancipates it from the grosser thrall
Of the present impulse, teaching Self-control,
Till Superstition with unconscious hand
Seat Reason on her throne. (ll. 80-87)

Coleridge here distinguishes three stages in man's development: ignorance, superstition, and reason. Superstition is the intermediary stage between darkness and light, ignorance and reason. This is also applicable to 'The Ancient Mariner'. It is quite conceivable that the mariner, through the adoration of the life of nature personified in the albatross, might have reached the stage of reason, of a recognition of the divine forces present in nature. As if to emphasize this possibility, the mariner clearly associates the bird with the divine, 'As if it had been a Christian soul,/ We hailed it in God's name' (ll. 65-66). As G. Wilson Knight puts it, to the mariner's superstitious fancy, 'The bird seems to suggest some redeeming Christ-like force in creation that guides humanity from primitive and fearful origins'.⁵⁰

The Coleridge of 'The Destiny of Nations' would have gone on to show the mariner's redemption through superstition, but in this poem he is concerned with the question what consequences a rejection of superstition and a subsequent relapse into darkness might entail. Thus the mariner shoots the albatross. In the mariner's world of fear this act is more than a mere killing of a bird; he kills what he has come to regard as the symbol of life in nature. The act is morally ambiguous. If the killing of the bird indicates his rejection of superstition and its supersession by reason, it is salutary; if it means a relapse into his former world of fear and darkness, it is deleterious. All depends on the consequences of the deed in the mariner's mind. As W.J. Bate states, 'It is less the simple act of shooting the albatross than it is the Mariner himself that makes us feel that it was so fearful and guilty a deed'.⁵¹

This is borne out by the poem: if the deed had been completely bad, punishment would have followed immediately, but nothing happens. The south wind keeps blowing and even the crew after initially condemning the killing of their superstitious image of life, change their mind and praise the mariner. Moreover, it is significant that in the stanzas following the shooting of the bird, the presence of the sun, of the life-giving force in nature itself, is referred to twice. The sun is even described as 'God's own head' (l. 97).⁵² By these means it is clearly suggested that at this point the mariner could have recognized the presence of God in nature, that after his rejection of superstition he might have reached the stage of reason — this in contrast with the crew who continue to think in superstitious terms, now regarding the bird as an evil force that had brought the fog and mist. But, of course, the mariner does not arrive at a true understanding of his position and is thrown back into his initial "Antarctic" view of nature, into a state of alienation from God and nature. Now his alienation is more confirmed, however,

and the way-out through superstition at least temporarily closed down. This means that he is to experience alienation to the very depth to which such an experience can go.

The mariner now enters a lifeless world in which even the sun and moon appear threatening and destructive. Having rejected superstition, he now accepts all his sense impressions literally: there is nothing, no God, nor anything beyond what he sees. His situation is comparable to that of the imprisoned Albert in *Osorio*,⁵³

Each pore and natural outlet shrivell'd up
By Ignorance and parching Poverty,
His energies roll back upon his heart,
And stagnate and corrupt ...
... So he lies
Circled with evil, till his very soul
Unmoulds its essence, hopelessly deform'd
By sights of ever more deformity!

And soon the mariner's deformity and despair start to impose themselves on nature. At night he thinks he sees 'death-fires' and water burning like 'a witch's oils' (ll. 128-129). The world he is confronted with becomes evil and he literally shrivels up, 'through utter drought ... / We could not speak' (ll. 135-137).

The superstitious crew — not the mariner — attribute this situation to a sea spirit roused by the mariner's action, and impelled by this fancy they hang the albatross about his neck, 'Instead of the cross, the Albatross/ About my neck was hung' (ll. 141-142). These lines aptly summarize the significance of the action of part II. Instead of superstition — the cross as a sailor's amulet — or reason — the Cross⁵⁴ as the reconciliation between man and God through Christ — the mariner is left with a dead bird, killed by himself, symbolizing his self-imposed alienation.

In part III the nightmare world of the mariner takes shape only very gradually, starting with the 'death-fires' of part II, through many questions indicating the uncertainty of the mariner's vision, finally culminating in the appearance of the spectre ship. This whole process is summed up in the line, 'A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!' (l. 153). The words 'I wist!' clearly suggest that it is only in the mariner's mind that the nightmare world takes shape. The repetition of the word 'glazed' (ll. 144, 146) carries a similar suggestion. The mariner, however, does not seem at all aware that he is dealing with the projections of his own fearful mind. Since his sense impressions have

become the standard of truth for him, he is unable to analyse or question them.

It is noteworthy that it nowhere appears that the crew actually see the ship as well. When the mariner cries 'A sail! A sail!', he registers their reaction as follows, 'Agape they heard me call:/ Gramercy! they for joy did grin ...' (ll. 163-164). The mariner obviously assumes that the crew members also see the ship, but his description offers no confirmation of this fact. They are surprised ('Agape') and derisive ('grin') but otherwise betray no reaction.

Besides, the description of the dicing game demonstrates all too clearly that it is no more than his personal vision: the death-like lady wins the game, but only the mariner is won. The crew members play no part in it. If the dicing had been an "objective fact", it would have meant that, as A.K. Mellor states, 'the fate of both the Mariner and the crew have been decided *wholly by chance*',⁵⁵ but since it is the outward projection of the mariner's mind, it reflects his own despair, his belief that he lives in a world governed by chance where all the odds are evil.

In this section of the poem Coleridge illustrates his conviction that, although nature in itself is beneficial, a nature thought to be devoid of God is not meaningless or neutral for long since man starts imposing his fears on the blank space surrounding him. In this way, the mariner becomes not only alienated from God and nature, but also from the crew members who live almost literally in a different world than he, which means that he regards them as being dead. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that, while the existence of the "real" world is indicated by the presence of the moon, the mariner "sees" the crew die, 'And every soul, it passed me by,/ Like the whizz of my cross-bow!' (ll. 222-223). These lines subtly suggest that it is only in the mariner's deluded vision that they die, since they carry a reminder of the description of the killing of the albatross, 'With my cross-bow/ I shot the Albatross' (ll. 81-82). The reference is not gratuitous: as he killed the bird because of his rejection of superstitious image-making, he now "kills" the crew because he has lost all basis of contact with them, living as he does in his own fear-determined world.⁵⁶ The death of the crew illustrates the mariner's complete solitude, the fact that he is wholly thrown back upon himself, cut off from nature and his fellow men.

The mariner has now reached a degree of isolation and alienation in which it is impossible for man to live, so that he realizes that he stands in need of outside help. In the same stanza in which his total despair and alienation is expressed, he also acknowledges the only agency from which real help can come,

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
 Alone on the wide wide sea;
 And Christ would take no pity on
 My soul in agony. (ll.232-235; 1798 version)

The nadir of his experience thus coincides with the beginning of the process of his recovery, and it is almost inevitable that it does.

The slow and painful process of recovery is described in part IV. Slowly the appearance of the world he "sees" changes, his dream world dissolves and he regains some contact with nature, man, and God. The moon is rising 'Softly' (l. 265), the men, though still "dead", are 'beautiful' (l. 236), and he makes his first initially ineffectual attempt to pray. Standing amid the ruins created by his 'heart as dry as dust' (l. 247), he recovers some grasp of reality. A 'spring of love' (l. 284) imparts some life to the drought of his heart, and this change of heart is mirrored in his vision of the external world: he blesses the watersnakes 'unaware' (ll. 285,287). The repetition of the word 'unaware' illustrates that the mariner is not the conscious agent of the action. He enacts as *exemplum* a development that is inevitable, necessary; a rejection of God inevitably leads to alienation, the very depth of alienation being more than man can face necessitates a movement towards renewed contact with nature, man, and God.

Since he now experiences, however momentarily and precariously, nature as a positive force, his basic alienation from nature and God ends and he is freed of its symbol, 'The Albatross fell off, and sank/ Like lead into the sea' (ll. 290-291). Thus the first stage of the process of recovery ends, but it is still only a beginning. A comparison with the last lines of part II points to the fact that although the albatross falls off his neck, there is not yet a cross, let alone the Cross, to replace it. This suggests that the mariner still has a long way to go: his future fate is to enact a process towards the cross, the stage of superstition in which life is at least bearable, and, if possible, to the Cross, the stage of reason in which he recognizes the divine light of nature, the world as it really is. Because the mariner is 'unaware' of what he experiences, however, it is already clear at this point that it is doubtful whether he will ever attain the stage of reason.

Moreover, his literal acceptance of his hallucinations in part III as something that really happened, seriously complicates his recovery: he really believes that he lives under a curse, that he is doomed to live in the thrall of the death-like lady. In a sense, his literal trust in his sense perceptions, his inability to take a reasoned distance from his visions, becomes the curse

that will haunt him the rest of his life. H. Bloom is certainly too optimistic when he states that in blessing the watersnakes, 'A less than ordinary man, never before alive to the sacramental vision of Nature as life, joy, love, suddenly declares the most elemental forms of life in Nature to be joyous and deserving of his affection',⁵⁷ while as the subsequent parts of the poem demonstrate, it is simply not true that, as A.K. Mellor states, 'a sense of joyful communion with an abundant life now replaces his previous sense of isolation'.⁵⁸

Part V details the next stage of the mariner's recovery. After his almost unconscious first step described in part IV, he now establishes a greater measure of contact with nature and the crew members, and thus the complete isolation in which he had engulfed himself is lifted. He recognizes a life in nature again, 'The upper air burst into life!' (l.313), and although the nature he is confronted with is far from friendly — rain, storm, lightning — he does not relapse into his previous fear-projecting.

Yet this does not mean that he has reached 'a sense of joyful communion with an abundant life'. In fact, there is something rather curious in the mariner's relation to nature as the following lines indicate, 'The strong wind reach'd the ship: it roar'd/ And dropped down, like a stone!' (ll. 319-320; 1798 version). The wind is roaring, nature is alive, but this living nature does not reach the mariner; nature seems to live essentially outside him (cf. ll. 301-304; 1798 version).

A similar suggestion is carried by the lines in which he describes the motion of the ship, 'Till noon we quietly sailed on,/ Yet never a breeze did breathe' (ll.373-374). The mariner sees a life in nature, but he does not feel it. The ship is sailing so there must "really" be a wind, but he is insensible to it, and since he still regards his sense perceptions as being unquestionably true, it does not occur to him that his inability to feel the wind may be due to his own state of mind. Instead of analysing his sense perceptions, he attributes the motion of the ship to a supernatural agency, 'Slowly and smoothly went the ship,/ Moved onward from beneath' (ll. 375-376) by the spirit from the 'land of mist and snow' (l. 403). The mariner has apparently reached the stage at which he perceives a reanimated nature around him, while he himself feels excluded from it. This sense of partial isolation induces him to superstition again, assigning the life of nature not to God's presence in it, but to a phantom of his own superstitious mind.

The mariner's relation to nature is paralleled and confirmed by his attitude to the crew members: they become alive again after their "death"

during the calm, but there is no communication between them and the mariner. Although he registers that their bodily functions are restored, the extent of his isolation from them is indicated by the fact that he considers their minds to be inactive. The mariner is at a loss to understand their strange revival, 'It had been strange, even in a dream,/ To have seen those dead men rise' (ll. 333-334). Yet in spite of the fact that he had noticed that their bodies did not decay and their eyes continued to watch him — 'The cold sweat melted from their limbs,/ Nor rot nor reek did they:/ The look with which they looked on me/ Had never passed away' (ll. 253-256) — the mariner does not draw the obvious conclusion that the men did not "really" die. As in the case of nature, he ascribes their resurrection to supernatural interference, to 'a troop of spirits blest' (l. 349) which enters the dead bodies.⁵⁹

For one moment he seems on the verge of recognizing his mistaken interpretation of the event,

The Mariners all 'gan pull the ropes,
But look at me they n'old:
Thought I, I am as thin as air —
They cannot me behold. (ll.374-377; 1798 version)

In these lines the mariner expresses his doubt as to whether he or the crew is dead and seems on the point of realizing that their supposed death may very well have been occasioned by his own alienation from them, by his own "mental death". His unreflective trust in his senses, however, proves stronger and he has recourse to the only alternative explanation by accounting for it in a superstitious way. There is, then, a similarity between the mariner's attitude to nature and his attitude to the crew, which is also apparent from the parallelism between the singing of the crew and the "singing" of nature (ll.352-366).

After total alienation, the mariner has thus arrived at the stage of superstition again. This is also borne out by the dream of the two voices which bears so little resemblance to a real dream that it seems rather like the mariner's superstitious interpretation of the events. But there is a difference from his superstitious reverence of the albatross; in that case his superstition was caused by fear of an unknown reality, whereas now it is caused by fear of something he believes to have experienced himself,

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread. (ll. 446-451)

As P. Magnuson puts it, 'The mariner is haunted by his fear of the return of the nightmare'.⁶⁰ This fear, and the fancies resulting from it, incite a movement away from the total alienation he had experienced.

After a temporary relapse into isolation, which indicates that the process of recovery is a slow and painful one, part VI describes a further step towards recovery. The mariner re-establishes some contact with nature itself,

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring —
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze —
On me alone it blew. (ll. 452-463)

This is the first time after his nightmare that the mariner experiences a beneficial power in nature actually operating on him: he feels the wind. His recognition of the beauty of nature outside him has led to a wish to participate in this beauty, assisting him to conquer his fear of nature, which must have been enormous in view of his former experience of what he considers nature's cruelty.

Yet this first contact with nature leaves him confused. On the one hand, his fear of nature is rekindled by it, while on the other 'it felt like a welcoming' (ll. 458-459). What is most striking in this first renewed encounter with nature, is his bewilderment and inability to make sense of what is happening. He does not regard the wind as a natural force, but as a supernatural interference for his sole benefit, 'On me alone it blew' (l. 463). Even when he feels nature working on him he persists in his superstitious attitude and explains the natural by referring to a supernatural agency whose connection with nature remains unspecified to the end.

With regard to the crew members his attitude changes little. They remain walking corpses and the strange interpretations he presents of their actions — their burning torches signalling their approach to land, he takes, for instance, for "seraph men" standing above their bodies — reveal that his

isolation from them has certainly not decreased. At the end of his journey, then, his reconciliation, if it may be so termed, with God, nature, and his fellow men is still very precarious, confused, and replete with superstition, yet given his curse, his literal belief in his sense perceptions, he is now probably as close to renewed contact as it is possible for him to come by himself.

The mariner also realizes his need of outside help. When he sees the hermit approaching the ship, he thinks 'He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away/ The Albatross's blood' (ll. 512-513). He is conscious of the fact that although the albatross has dropped into the sea and the basic cause of his alienation has been removed, the blood of the albatross still clings to him, that he is still alienated. It is not clear whether the mariner is shrived or not, and it is not important since his "sin" is not moral but existential, striking at the roots of man's attitude to the external world, and ultimately to God.

The mariner's state of mind after his return seems to have progressed little beyond the stage he had reached at the end of the journey. As H. House notes, he 'comes back as half outcast and half participator'.⁶¹ He is an outcast because he is still alienated, at least from his fellow men, 'I pass, like night, from land to land' (l. 586), and it is telling that at the beginning of the poem he strikes the wedding guest as a 'grey-beard loon' (l. 11).

He is still haunted by his experience and the fears it has engendered: at times he feels an agony which forces him to tell his tale. The narration of his tale confronts him not only with the cause of his fear again, the fear of a world in which 'God himself/ Scarce seeméd there to be' (ll. 599-600), but also with his supposedly miraculous return from that world. It is this belief in a beneficial supernatural interference on his behalf which lies at the root of his newly acquired, partial participation in the world of nature, man, and God. His experience of isolation has revealed to him his great existential need of God, and the miraculous wind and the resurrection of the crew have given rise to the belief in a propitious supernatural power — however much this belief may be based on superstition — so that his alienation from God is mitigated, and, because of this, his alienation from man and nature.

His greatest pleasure seems 'To walk together to the kirk,/ And all together pray' (ll. 605-606) indicating that through his worship of God, through communal prayer, his total alienation from men is at least alleviated. In the last lines of his tale, the mariner seems to sense dimly the world as it really is and God's relation to it, although to God's continuous presence in it he remains blind,

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. (ll. 614-617)

Many critics have argued that 'the moral can hardly fit the story',⁶² and that 'it contains only a small part of its meaning'.⁶³ If one regards these lines as the moral lesson of the tale, this is certainly true. But they could also be taken as the mariner's advice to the wedding guest as to how man can avoid entering the world of alienation and fear; advice which implies that even in his own distorted understanding of the experience, the mariner has come to recognize that his basic mistake, his "sin", was his rejection of the divine in nature.

At the end of the poem, then, the mariner is still caught in his superstitious attitude and has not reached the stage of reason. But what could be expected? Hardly that a fifteenth century sailor whose reasoning capacities seem rather modest, would come to a realization of what was with difficulty discovered and formulated by the most gifted philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Beer asserts, 'the need for further intellectual questioning and exploration is foreclosed by giving a level to the story which involves assigning its narration to a sensibility more simple than his [i.e. Coleridge's] own'.⁶⁴ Complete recovery would have required an awareness of the fact that his alienation was due to his unconditional trust in his senses, that his ordeals in the calm originated in his own fear-ridden mind, and that nature, in spite of these ordeals, is a continuous revelation of the divine. The faith in God and somewhat precarious love of nature he has acquired at the end of the poem is as much as he, or any man in his position, could hope for.

'The Ancient Mariner' can be regarded as a continuation of Coleridge's concern with those aspects of man's relation to nature that were the subject of his poetic debate with Wordsworth, described in the preceding chapter. The central question of this debate was to what extent the external influence of nature suffices to guide man to joy and virtue; whether this external influence in itself is powerful enough to overcome the largely unconscious inner barriers which may prevent man from recognizing God's presence in nature, or whether some mental activity on the part of man is called for. In the apparently optimistic position Coleridge had presented in 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' an undercurrent of tension and uncertainty was

already recognized. In 'The Ancient Mariner' he squarely faces those issues which in his previous poems were largely hidden beneath the surface.

The change in Coleridge's attitude to nature which begins to take definite shape in 'The Ancient Mariner' is of fundamental importance to his further development since it implies that his main centre of interest starts to shift from an exclusive concern with nature outside of man, man being regarded as no more than an extension of this nature, to a growing preoccupation with man as the receiver of this influence. In order to obtain a better understanding of the causes and consequences of this fundamental change, it is interesting to note a similar change in Berkeley's philosophy. As has been argued, Coleridge's view of nature was close to Berkeley's at this time, and it appears that the problems Coleridge explores in 'The Ancient Mariner' also became of major concern in Berkeley's later philosophical writings.

To avoid misunderstanding, it should be emphasized that Berkeley is merely used as an illustration to indicate the difficulties which are the more or less logical consequence of Coleridge's attitude to nature. It is not my wish to argue that in this respect he was in any direct way influenced by Berkeley. They are presented as parallel cases revealing similar problems inherent in the conception of nature which has been characterized as a combination of empiricism and Neoplatonism in chapter III of this study.

In his *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and the *Three Dialogues* (1713), Berkeley erects the philosophical structure which Coleridge to a large extent adopted in such poems as 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison'. Nature is described as God's language to man, 'every thing we see, hear, feel, or any other wise perceive by sense, being a sign or effect of the Power of God'.⁶⁵ The divine light of nature is, in fact, so strong that men who are incapable of seeing it 'seem as it were blinded with excess of light'.⁶⁶ If this is so, one cannot but wonder why so many men do not recognize God's presence in nature.

Berkeley believes that this is due to man's assumption of the existence of substance, matter, which he regards as the basis of all atheism since, instead of God, it makes 'a self-existent, stupid, unthinking substance the root and origin of all beings'.⁶⁷ The postulation of the existence of a material world outside man leads to a mistaken conception of one's sense perceptions. It would be wrong, Berkeley affirms, to place, 'the fault originally in our faculties, and not rather in the wrong use we make of them',⁶⁸ 'we have first raised a dust [by assuming the existence of matter], and then complain, we cannot see'.⁶⁹ Nature is the direct communication of the Supreme Spirit to

the human spirit and consequently what man perceives does by its very nature exist, not as matter, but as divine revelation to man through his senses, so that 'I can as well doubt of my own being, as of the being of those things which I actually perceive by sense ... since the very existence of an unthinking being consists in *being perceived*'.⁷⁰

In the early Berkeley, then, there are only two relations to external reality which it is possible for man to have: either he recognizes his sense perceptions as the direct communication of the Author of Nature, which means that they are meaningful, beneficial, and truthful, or he regards them as being caused by senseless matter, which leads to scepticism and atheism, to the world becoming 'a fortuitous concourse of atoms',⁷¹ to man's alienation from nature and God. But what is entirely absent in the early Berkeley is the idea that man may become so entangled in his own imaginings that he becomes incapable of distinguishing between the world he has himself created by his imagination and the world as presented to him by his senses, since, as he confidently asserts, sense perceptions are 'more strong, lively, and distinct than those of the imagination'.⁷² His wish to demonstrate the divine character of what man perceives, necessitates Berkeley to assume the absolute trustworthiness of man's senses and his indubitable ability to understand what he perceives. Otherwise, his *esse est percipi* could easily give rise to the conception of a chaotic universe dependent on each individual man's mental aberrations.

There is in Berkeley's view some room for man's misunderstanding of his perceptions, but never to such an extent that it would invalidate his basic argument that since they 'are not creatures of my will. There is therefore some other will or spirit [i.e. God] that produces them'.⁷³ The extent to which the mariner in his dream world sees "creatures of his own will", seems at odds with, or would at least seriously complicate, Berkeley's demonstration of the divine character of sense perceptions. In his view it was possible to see the world in a dim light, but the world such a man sees is the same as that perceived by any other man, only less clear. As Hylas states when he has been convinced of Berkeley's point of view, 'I have been a long time distrusting my senses; methought I saw things by a dim light, and through false glasses. Now the glasses are removed, and a new light breaks in upon my understanding'.⁷⁴ The point is that in 'The Ancient Mariner' Coleridge on the one hand adopts this Berkeleyan view of the continuous presence of God in nature, whereas on the other hand the mariner is capable of creating a world that seems diametrically opposed to this divine world. In a sense

one could argue that the mariner's fault is exactly his too great, literal trust in his senses, his belief that *esse est percipi*.

In *Siris* (1744) Berkeley seems to have lost his former confidence in man's ability to recognize the divine origin of nature. He argues that an unreflective, initial trust in sense perceptions, and a literal acceptance of them, may occasion alienation which can only be overcome by reason,⁷⁵

Sense at first besets and overbears the mind. The sensible appearances are all in all: our reasonings are employed about them; our desires terminate in them; we look no farther for realities or causes; till intellect begins to dawn, and cast a ray on this shadowy scene. We then perceive the true principle of unity, identity, and existence. Those things that before seemed to constitute the whole of being, upon taking an intellectual view of things, prove to be but fleeting phantoms.

But if all depends on the exertions of man's reason or intellect, what about the great majority of mankind that is incapable of consistent reasoning, even if it wanted to; what about people like the mariner?

Berkeley discusses this difficulty in a passage which will be quoted in full, because it reads like a description of the mariner and his world. It is not impossible that this passage played at the back of Coleridge's mind when he conceived the idea of 'The Ancient Mariner',⁷⁶

The more we think, the more difficult shall we find it to conceive how mere man, grown up in the vulgar habits of life, and weighed down by sensuality, should ever be able to arrive at science without some tradition or teaching, which might either sow the seeds of knowledge, or call forth and excite those latent seeds that were originally sown in the soul.

Human souls in this low situation, bordering on mere animal life, bear the weight and see through the dusk of a gross atmosphere, gathered from wrong judgments daily passed, false opinions daily learned, and early habits of an older date than either judgment or opinion. Through such a medium the sharpest eye cannot see clearly. And if by some extraordinary effort the mind should surmount this dusky region, and snatch a glimpse of pure light, she is soon drawn backward and depressed by the heaviness of the animal nature to which she is chained. And if again she chanceth, amidst the agitation of wild fancies and strong affections, to spring upwards, a second relapse speedily succeeds into this region of darkness and dreams.

Nevertheless, as the mind gathers strength by repeated acts, we should not despond, but continue to exert the prime and flower of our faculties, still recovering, and reaching on, and struggling into the upper region, whereby our natural weakness and blindness may be in some degree remedied, and a taste attained of truth and intellectual life.

The mariner is like a human soul 'in this low situation', incapable of trans-

cending his sensuous world of darkness and dreams, because he is unable to employ his reason properly and analyse his sense perceptions. Also the mariner is described as "springing upwards" and "relapsing" and after another apparent recovery "relapsing" again, until he finally reaches a stage at which "his natural blindness may be in some degree remedied".

This implies the break-down of the optimistic idea that nature is beneficial, if only man is open to it. No matter how open-minded, man needs his reason, his intellect, some inner power to apprehend the life-giving forces of nature, and the difficulty is that most men by themselves are incapable of attaining this true vision of the world. Consequently, these men stand in need of a teaching which "calls forth and excites those latent seeds that were originally sown in his soul". Man has to be taught to look at nature in the right way and in Coleridge's conception it is the poet's task to do this, as he states in a letter to his brother (March 10, 1798),⁷⁷

I devote myself ... in poetry, to elevate the imagination & set the affections in right tune by the beauty of the inanimate impregnated, as with a living soul, by the presence of Life — in prose, to the seeking with patience & a slow, very slow mind 'Quid sumus, et quidnam victuri gignimur' — What our faculties are & what they are capable of becoming.

This passage has been quoted so often, that one has almost grown immune to it, but if read from the Berkeleyan background of Coleridge's thought, these words acquire a new transparency. To be taught 'What our faculties are & what they are capable of becoming' is exactly what the common man needs most. Teaching man to see 'the presence of Life' in nature, becomes the important duty of the poet since, if man fails to perceive this Life, he is caught in the trap of the mariner: surrounded by God, but incapable of realizing it.

It will be clear that the emphasis of Coleridge's thought has thus fundamentally shifted. He started out by asserting the divine influence of nature, man being no more than a passive receiver, while now the determining factor of contact with God in nature, is no longer outside man, but inside him. Whether man is capable of seeing 'the presence of Life' is determined by his way of seeing, by his ability to rise above a literal interpretation of his sense perceptions. Coleridge's conception of nature as divine revelation has not changed, but the role of man as receiver has: the emphasis has shifted from outer to inner.

When Coleridge writes, 'I devote myself ... in poetry, to elevate the imagination ... by the beauty of the inanimate impregnated ... by the presence

of Life', he does not refer to the imagination as a divine inner force in man. All he affirms is that man has to attune himself and his faculties to the divine life that is around him: man is described as receiver, not as creator. But once the centre of interest has shifted from nature to man, the idea of man as creator is not far away. In this respect it is telling that already in Berkeley this idea is referred to,⁷⁸

And, indeed, it seemeth that the mind, so far forth as person, is individual
... therein resembling the divine One by participation, and imparting to
other things what itself participates from above.

This statement points forwards to Coleridge's later conception of the imagination.

At the time Coleridge wrote 'The Ancient Mariner', however, he still conceived of the imagination in largely negative terms as a faculty which tends to interfere with man's reception of the divine language of nature. This poem also indicates the difficulties this negative attitude to the imagination gives rise to: the alienating power of the phantom-shaping imagination may become so great, that the healing forces of nature prove insufficient to cure the mariner. Although at the end of the poem the mariner seems to have found a way to cope with his estrangement from his fellow men and has — 'through fear and enforced obedience', as Bostetter somewhat strongly states⁷⁹ — come to revere God, he is caught in a trap which he can neither fully understand nor extricate himself from.

The fact that nature is incapable of healing the mariner implies that Coleridge's high hopes of an amelioration of mankind through nature's ministry are invalidated and that only a dim hope of teaching mankind to perceive the divine in nature through poetry remains. On the evidence of his contemporaneous poetry it seems questionable whether Coleridge was willing to resign himself to these inauspicious implications. An alternative is, of course, to judge more favourably of the imagination, a direction indicated by Wordsworth's poetic comment on 'The Ancient Mariner' in 'Peter Bell' (April-June, 1798). Since it sheds light on the way Wordsworth and Coleridge must have discussed these issues, it is worthwhile to consider Wordsworth's poem briefly on the basis of its definitive version.⁸⁰

'Peter Bell' reads like a consistent attempt to expose the supposed inadequacy of Coleridge's treatment of the mariner's problem. In the first place Wordsworth takes exception to the fanciful, exotic setting of 'The Ancient Mariner'. In the Prologue, the poet refuses to take the boat which will guide him to many miraculous sights in heaven and on earth since this

but leads to 'a wild dream, or worse illusion' (l.188). Wordsworth's objection is that if one is trying to come to an understanding of the difficulties a simple man is confronted with when he attempts to recognize the divine in nature, one should keep within the bounds of the world such a man knows, his own home country, 'The common growth of mother-earth' (l.133).

Wordsworth's second initial criticism is levelled against the fact that the mariner has no clearly defined personality. At the beginning of part I the poet starts to relate his story *in medias res*, without giving the necessary introduction, but he is immediately checked by the listening squire,

'Hold!' cried the Squire, 'against the rules
Of common sense you're surely sinning;
This leap is for us all too bold;
Who Peter was, let that be told,
And start from the beginning.' (ll. 196-200)

The reader of 'The Ancient Mariner' is informed neither of the antecedents of the mariner, nor of his moral character. Throughout the poem he remains a man without a face, an *exemplum* rather than an individual person.

Wordsworth does not leave his audience in similar uncertainty. Peter Bell is a wicked man who has been married twelve times in spite of the fact that 'To see him was to fear him' (l. 285). Besides, in the course of his life-long wandering in the countryside he has remained impervious to nature's influence, 'nature ne'er could find the way/ Into the heart of Peter Bell' (ll.244-245). It is an important difference that Peter is introduced as an evil character, since wickedness can be repented of and forgiven. By narrowing down the scope of the problem to a primarily moral one, Wordsworth thus prepares the way to a complete solution which Coleridge was incapable of reaching because the mariner's problem was not so much moral as existential. This means that even if the mariner committed a sin, he was unconscious of its true character and therefore unable to repent of it.

The experiences of Peter Bell described in parts I and II closely resemble those of the mariner. Peter's journey starts when he decides to take a short-cut and leaves the 'trusty guide' (l. 339) of the road, venturing, like the mariner, into a region unknown to him where he is confronted with a threatening nature in a deserted quarry, 'for shadows of strange shape,/ Massy and black, before him lay' (ll. 356-357). Also Peter is given a sign of comfort in the midst of this alien world: he comes to a beautiful green spot of land where he finds an ass. Instead of being grateful for this sign of life, however, he decides to steal the ass. When the animal refuses to move, he starts beating

it — an action comparable to the shooting of the albatross — and through this apparently insignificant incident Peter Bell enters his nightmare world.

He suspects witchcraft (l. 417) and becomes frightened (l. 421), and although he soon discovers that the ass is hardly worth his trouble since it is 'wasted to a skeleton',⁸¹ he persists in his wicked resolve and keeps on beating the ass impelled by 'demoniac power' (l. 474). Gradually his fear and vexation overcome him and nature disintegrates,

The moon uneasy looked and dimmer,
The broad blue heavens appeared to glimmer,
And the rocks staggered all around — (ll. 483-485)

Like the mariner's, Peter's "sin" leads to his entering a nightmare world of his own making, but, unlike the mariner's, Peter's deed is a direct consequence of his evil disposition and thus clearly defined in moral terms. As in 'The Ancient Mariner', Peter's nightmare is introduced by means of questions. Looking into the pool, he sees a 'startling sight',

Is it the moon's distorted face?
The ghost-like image of a cloud?
Is it a gallows there portrayed?
Is Peter of himself afraid?
Is it a coffin, — or a shroud? (ll. 501-505)

Conquered by fear of his vision, his own projections on nature, he falls into a trance, 'back he falls, as if his life were flown!' (l. 530).

An important difference between 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Peter Bell' is that in the former poem the protagonist himself narrates the "events" so that the phantoms of his fear are presented as actual and "real", whereas in the latter poem the narrator is reliable and leaves the reader in no doubt concerning the true character of Peter's vision,⁸²

Ten thousand ugly apprehensions,
Of eyes and ears the black inventions,
The soul of Peter are deceiving.

Peter wakes from his trance with 'glazed eye' (l. 538),⁸³ but the nadir of his experience has passed since he realizes that 'He is yet where mortals dwell' (l. 544). Thus he is ready for his "return journey" which Wordsworth is at pains to parallel with the mariner's, even at the price of an inappropriate simile,

Now — like a tempest-shattered bark,
That overwhelmed and prostrate lies,

And in a moment to the verge
 Is lifted of a foaming surge —
 Full suddenly the Ass doth rise! (ll. 556-560)

Peter is now capable of recognizing the reality behind his fear-ridden phantoms and discovers that it is the dead master of the ass lying in the pool that induced them. Unlike the mariner, Peter analyses his fearful experience and is able to come to terms with it.

Out of pity (l. 595) he decides to do something good for once and mounts the ass to inform the relatives of the deceased. Now that he has chosen to do good — a conscious moral choice, not an 'unaware' blessing based on a 'spring of love' originating from some unknown source — nature appears like a temple to Peter, although he does not yet feel inclined to worship there (ll. 681-690). But it is not nature which finally heals Peter, but a force within himself, described as 'the Spirits of the Mind' (l. 783) 'coming from the wayward world' (l. 781) 'that play with soul and sense' (l. 767).

This inner force operates in an interesting way. Although, as before, it occasions misconceptions of external events, it is no longer a negative force, but through a temporary alienation from the outside world it teaches Peter the truth about himself and guides him to redemption. When he hears the earth rumble — no inexplicable rumble as in 'The Ancient Mariner', but caused by miners using gunpowder — he interprets this as a warning not to return to his evil ways. When he sees the ruins of a chapel, 'the Spirits of the Mind' induce him to remember one of his sins and thus confront him with his former, wicked self. They even usurp upon 'the rights of visual sense' (l. 917) and show him the pitiful victim of one of his sins. This inner force, then, impresses upon Peter his former wickedness and thus, when overhearing a snatch of a methodist sermon — 'Repent! Repent! ... / And, though your sins be red as scarlet, / They shall be white as snow!' (ll. 951-955) — he is both ready and willing to take the road to complete salvation. This road lies open to him because his sins were the consequence of conscious moral choice.

It is only after the 'Spirits of the Mind' have converted him into a "just and pure" man, that Peter is capable of benefiting from nature's influence,

And now is Peter taught to feel
 That man's heart is a holy thing;
 And Nature, through a world of death,
 Breathes into him a second breath,
 More searching than the breath of spring. (ll. 1071-1075)

Thus by moralizing 'The Ancient Mariner' and by taking a more positive attitude towards man's inner powers, Wordsworth is able to counter the pessimistic implications of Coleridge's poem with an assertion of the essential goodness of nature, man, and God.

It falls beyond the scope of this study to consider whether Wordsworth's somewhat ambiguous conception of the man's inner powers as temporarily alienating man from, but ultimately reconciling him with, God and nature is a viable solution in the long run. However this may be, 'Peter Bell' indicates that Coleridge's inability to find a solution to the dilemma of the mariner in line with his own beliefs about nature as a divine teacher, might have given rise to a radical reorientation with regard to the role the imagination plays in man's confrontation with nature. It will appear, however, that Coleridge was not as yet prepared to pursue a line of thought in the direction Wordsworth had indicated in 'Peter Bell'.

CHAPTER VI
'FROST AT MIDNIGHT':
A COMPANION PIECE TO 'THE ANCIENT MARINER'

It is a temptation for someone trying to understand the chronological development of a particular poet to impose a more logically consistent pattern on the material than is warranted. From the historical perspective of today, the problems that confronted Coleridge because he assigned a negative role to the imagination in man's perception of nature, could easily be regarded as a prelude to his adoption of a more positive attitude to the imagination as a divine force comparable to that of nature. But this would be to underestimate the force with which all his convictions pulled in a different direction. A study of the poems Coleridge wrote before his departure to Germany in September 1798 reveals that the idea of a divine imagination was as yet unacceptable to him.

'Frost at Midnight' (February, 1798) presents an essentially similar position to that of 'The Ancient Mariner' which is hardly surprising since the two poems were written contemporaneously. At first sight the two poems seem remarkably different; 'The Ancient Mariner' describes a world of despair, of fear and unresolved tension, whereas 'Frost at Midnight' suggests a final reconciliation between man and nature after initial alienation, partly because of its quiet, contemplative tone.

Most critics, in fact, interpret 'Frost at Midnight' in this way. As R. Parker puts it, 'the significant movement in the poem is from the willful and superstitious solipsism of a depressed sensibility, toying with a companionable form, to the apprehension of a regenerate companionship, based not on superstition but on substantial belief'.¹ Thus conceived, the poem registers a process of growth from alienation 'towards an affirmation of the potential for good in experience',² to a 'reconciliation of the actual and the imagined' and an assertion of 'the oneness of the mind of man and the objects of nature, of the union of the one and the many, and of subject and object'.³

Yet it is questionable whether a gradually ascendant movement compar-

able to that of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' is indeed present in the poem. The poem consists of two clearly distinguished parts, the first dealing with the poet himself, the second with his son Hartley, and a contrast between these two parts is suggested,

My babe so beautiful! it fills my heart
 With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
 And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
 And in far other scenes! For I was reared
 In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
 And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
 But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
 By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
 Of ancient mountain ... (ll. 48-56)

In contradistinction to the poet whose inability to respond to nature's influence is attributed to the fact that he was 'reared/ In the great city', in a repressive school atmosphere — 'Awed by the stern preceptor's face' (l. 37) — Hartley is described as someone who will be able to establish an almost ideal degree of receptivity since his education is to take place in the beneficent atmosphere of nature itself, since "the great universal teacher shall mould his spirit" (cf. ll. 63-64).

The opposition between the poet and his son is pivotal to the structure and content of the poem. Instead of a single ascendant movement, the structure of the poem comprises two distinct parts, the one dealing with the mild but unmitigated alienation of the poet, the other affirming the possibility of an unimpeded, joyful contact between man and nature as exemplified in Hartley.

Coleridge's situation at the beginning of 'Frost at Midnight' is not unlike that of the mariner on the South Pole,⁴ only less extreme. Like the mariner he is confronted with an alien nature which is experienced as vaguely threatening,

'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
 And vexes meditation with its strange
 And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
 This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
 With all the numberless goings-on of life,
 Inaudible as dreams! (ll. 8-13)

The extreme silence conveys a lack of contact with nature. But the poet's solitude and alienation are not as complete as the mariner's: he knows there is life in nature, he knows that the frost 'performs its secret ministry' (l. 1),

although to his blunted sensibility it appears devoid of all life. The phrase 'Inaudible as dreams!' suggests that the silence of nature is not so much due to an absence of life in nature itself, as to the poet's mental inability to register this life, to his alienating thoughts and dreams which interfere between him and nature.

In an attempt to cope with the deadening silence surrounding him, the poet is tempted to project his own thoughts on nature, as the mariner did on the albatross, thus imposing on it a self-originating hence "superstitious" life. Watching the fluttering film on the grate, he indulges in the following fancy,

Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
With which I can hold commune. Idle thought! (ll. 17-19; 1798 version)

As is well-known, these lines closely resemble a passage of Cowper's *The Task*, and the reference is not gratuitous since Cowper explicitly relates the 'sooty films' to superstition.⁵

Since Coleridge is convinced of the presence of divine life in nature and he regards self-projections on nature, even when merely playful, as potentially dangerous because they may lead to a superstitious substitution of self-imposed life for "real life", he immediately rejects these 'toys/ Of the self-watching subtilizing mind' (ll. 22-23; 1798 version). Although the tone of the poem is much lighter, less troubled than 'The Ancient Mariner' — the poet's projections are only 'toys' and, besides, he projects "life", not "fear" on the external world — it is clear that the two poems describe essentially the same predicament.

After this rejection of superstitious life-projecting, the poet plunges into memories of his schooldays. At first sight the connection between his memories and his actual situation amidst a silent nature seems to be merely associative, the fluttering film reminding him of his childhood. But there is more to it than this. By reverting to his childhood Coleridge tries to account for his present insusceptibility to nature,

How often in my early school-boy days
With most believing superstitious wish,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch the *stranger* there!
...
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams! (ll. 24-35; 1798 version)

In his schooldays spent in the city, far removed from nature's divine life, he had acquired the habit of projecting his own wishes on the world around him. The words 'most believing' indicate that he was apparently unaware of the incompatibility of his wishes and "reality". These 'soothing' visions caused him to live, as it were, in a prolonged, self-created dream, which made life in the stifling, "lifeless" atmosphere surrounding him at least a little more bearable. Since he contrasts his own childhood with the future childhood of his son in nature, it is plain that he lays the blame of his present alienation on his past, on the fact that his mind was moulded primarily by his own dreams and not by the divine language of nature.

Like 'The Ancient Mariner', 'Frost at Midnight' does not offer a solution to the problem of alienation. Although in the second part of the poem Coleridge rather exuberantly expresses his belief in the divine life of nature, and Hartley's joyful participation in it, it is conspicuous that a unifying coda like that of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' where he himself comes to share in the joys of nature Charles experiences, is entirely absent. By attaching great importance to man's upbringing, then, Coleridge tries to find an explanation of his predicament. He suggests that an education in and by nature enables man to perceive and experience its divine life, while an education like his own, in the city, may have an alienating effect even if one is theoretically convinced of the divine presence in nature.

The section about his son Hartley reveals that Coleridge's faith in nature is unaffected by his estrangement from it. This appears, for instance, from perhaps the most explicitly Berkeleyan lines he ever wrote,

so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself. (ll. 58-62)

In 'Frost at Midnight', then, as more indirectly in 'The Ancient Mariner', an unresolved tension between theory and practice is apparent. At the end of the poem Coleridge has analysed the problem of nature's silence, yet, as P. Magnuson affirms, 'The quietude in the final lines is symbolic of fullness to Hartley, but to Coleridge the total significance behind the clearly apprehended sensation, the empirical evidence of the ministry, is still a secret'.⁶ As another instance of the reciprocal influence Coleridge and Wordsworth exerted on each other, it may be noted in passing that in Wordsworth's contemporaneous poetry a similar emphasis on the importance

of education is apparent; especially in the first version of *The Prelude* (1798,1799), in which he describes his own childhood as a time when 'he held unconscious intercourse/ With the eternal Beauty'⁷ of nature. This early exposure to nature's influxes moulded the poet's sensibility into a deeply rooted rapport with nature so that later his "natural" sensibility contributed to his understanding of nature, became an 'auxiliary light' affording him the 'visionary power' to experience and describe nature as it really is.⁸ Thus both poets expressed their conviction of the far-reaching consequences of childhood experiences, Wordsworth explaining his own contact with nature on the basis of his education by nature, Coleridge accounting for his estrangement by referring to his childhood in the great city.

As appears from his unequivocal rejection of his fanciful and seemingly harmless thoughts about the film as a 'companionable form' (l. 19), Coleridge was convinced of the danger of indulging in imaginative projections on nature, even when they are merely playful and not instigated by fear. A similar belief is expressed in 'The Nightingale' (April, 1798),⁹ and, more strongly, in 'The Old Man of the Alps' (February/ March, 1798).

The latter poem resembles Wordsworth's 'The Ruined Cottage' both in its narrative mode and its content. What was more or less implicit in Wordsworth's poem, however, is stated very explicitly here. Like Margaret, the protagonist of Coleridge's poem is eagerly awaiting the return of her lover, and fondly thinks of the happiness they will share after his return,

*She play'd with fancies of a gayer hue,
Enamour'd of the scenes her wishes drew;
And oft she prattled with an eager tongue
Of promised joys that would not loiter long,
Till with her tearless eyes so bright and fair,
She seem'd to see them realis'd in air!* (ll. 27-32)

Although these hopeful fancies may appear quite harmless, they imply a deviation from nature and as such are rather expressive of a hope originating in man, a superstition, than a true faith implanted by nature's divine force.

The poem shows that even these innocent fancies may have grave consequences. When the girl learns that her lover has died in France, she is mentally unable to resign herself to her fate and becomes mad, alienated from both man and nature,

*She roam'd, without a purpose, all alone,
Thro' high grey vales unknowing and unknown.* (ll. 87-88)

At this stage Coleridge clearly associates the activities of the imagination, or fancy, with superstition. This also appears from 'The Three Graves' (spring, 1798?) where the imagination induces a superstitious belief in a curse which causes not only alienation from nature (cf. ll. 492-500), but also ever increasing misery and untimely death.¹⁰

In the months preceding his journey to Germany, then, Coleridge did not alter his negative attitude to the imagination, although the poetry of this period attests to his continued preoccupation with this aspect of his thought. It might be wondered why he was not prepared to conceive more positively of the imagination. Part of the answer is, no doubt, that a more positive conception of the imagination would have meant a radical change in his whole way of thinking.

The example of Wordsworth's 'Peter Bell' is illuminating in this respect. In this poem it is, after all, not nature which heals the protagonist, but the 'Spirits of the Mind'. The role of nature in Peter Bell's conversion is at best subsidiary to this force from within. Coleridge may have felt that one cannot have it both ways: either one puts one's hopes on the divine influence of nature, or one chooses to rely on one's own inner powers. Of the latter Coleridge was highly suspicious, probably also because of the nightmares which so often troubled him at this time. From his point of view, dependence on man's inner powers would be synonymous with an idolatry of self which would inevitably lead to alienation from God and nature.

Nevertheless there is a more positive role for the imagination to play. If man is open to nature's impulses, his imagination will also be activated, like a wind-harp on which the wind blows, and will incite man to dream visions of better worlds. This is expressed in the following passage of 'Fears in Solitude' (April, 1798),

And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of Nature!
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark,
That singest like an angel in the clouds! (ll.20-28)

From these lines, strongly reminiscent of Akenside, it appears that Coleridge's attitude to nature has not basically changed. He still remains within

the framework of thought which has been characterized as a combination of empiricism and Neoplatonism. Apart from direct, verbal revelation, nature is the sole channel through which the divine can be apprehended and the imagination inspired by nature performs its due part in the process. But if man lets himself be *guided* by his imagination, this will almost certainly lead to his becoming imprisoned in a world of his own making, to his becoming 'A sordid solitary thing, ... / Feeling himself, his own low self the whole'.¹¹

CHAPTER VII

A BRIEF SURVEY OF CONTINENTAL IDEAS ON MAN AND NATURE

In Coleridge's poetic output an interval of comparative silence occurs between the famous poems he wrote before his trip to Germany (1798, 1799) and a temporary revival in 1802 during which 'Dejection: an Ode' and 'The Picture' were written. The intervening years were a period of fundamental change in Coleridge's ideas which can only be traced on the basis of the information provided by the letters and notebooks, since significant poetic material is lacking.

A complicating factor which seriously increases the difficulty of analysing Coleridge's development during this period, is the recurring question of the extent to which he was influenced by continental thought. In order to define at least the beginning of an answer to this question, this chapter will concentrate on the difference between the relevant ideas predominant in Germany at the time, and those held by Coleridge before his journey to Germany. The next chapter will deal more specifically with Coleridge and will attempt to obtain an understanding of the change which occurred in his conception of man's relation to nature after this journey.

A detailed consideration of Coleridge's development during this period and its background, is necessary since the change which took place in his thought strikes at the roots of his beliefs about the relation between man and nature as they have emerged from the preceding chapters. Besides, a detailed discussion of his development during this period has not been presented so far, probably because to critics who are especially concerned with poetry this period has relatively little to offer, while commentators of a more theoretical disposition are primarily interested in the later Coleridge.

An attempt to define briefly the cultural climate in Germany towards the end of the eighteenth century is, of course, a virtually impossible task in view of the vast amount of material that would have to be covered. But the alternative is to refer to some vague "German contribution" which, because of its ill-defined and generalized character, might prove, if not positively

misleading, at best of only limited relevance. Therefore I have chosen to discuss those thinkers whose ideas in the area of epistemology and external reality are on the one hand characteristic of the cultural climate Coleridge encountered during his stay in Germany, and who on the other hand were probably read by him between 1799 and 1803. In this way it may be possible to determine, at least tentatively, the degree to which "German ideas" played a formative role in Coleridge's development.

For reasons of clarity I have decided to discuss these continental ideas in a separate chapter as a preliminary background for the description of Coleridge's development in the next; this has the additional advantage of avoiding even the appearance of arbitrarily reading continental ideas into Coleridge's own conjectures.

Since a description of continental thought, important as it is in itself, is of only subsidiary interest to this study, it is impossible to do full justice to the complexity of the thought of the thinkers discussed. Inevitably, this chapter cannot present more than a collage of fragments which will, I hope, give a general impression of the tendency of continental ideas during this period.

Later in his life Coleridge tended to play down the importance of the German influence. In 1817, for instance, he asserts that he had conceived his ideas 'during the study of Plato, and the scholars of Ammonius, and in later times of Scotus (Joan. Erigena), Giordano Bruno, Behmen, and the much calumniated Spinoza ... long before Schelling had published his first and imperfect view'.¹ Since the reference here must be to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, published in 1797, this is claiming a great deal more than seems justified on the basis of the poetic and non-poetic evidence of this period.²

In spite of Coleridge's repeated assertions to this effect,³ most commentators today are inclined to reject the suggestion that he developed his ideas independently of continental influence. As G.N.G. Orsini concludes, 'such an anticipation [of Kantian and post-Kantian ideas], very unlikely in itself, is not confirmed by an examination of the evidence'.⁴ The analysis of Coleridge's attitude to nature in the preceding chapters points in a similar direction.

As has been shown, Coleridge's conception of nature up to 1798 was founded on a combination of Hartleyan, later Berkeleyan, empiricism and Neoplatonism. Man was regarded as an, ideally, passive receiver of the influxes of nature's divine life through sense perception. In view of the fundamentally different orientation of German thought, it is necessary to

emphasize the empiricist tendency of Coleridge's ideas at the time: he accepted the priority of sense over mind, nature being the active force which moulds the human mind.

Although in the preceding chapters a movement towards an increased preoccupation with mental activity was recognized, it is significant that he almost invariably associated this with evil and alienation. Possibly the only exception is found in 'Frost at Midnight' where he seemed to go one step further and hesitatingly acknowledged the possibility of a beneficial mental activity. A mind, like Hartley's, educated in and by nature, was regarded as being capable of salutary activity in the sense that it enhances and intensifies nature's impulses; a mind, like his own, educated in the city, was thought to alienate man from nature. Yet, even if in this poem Coleridge tentatively allowed of a favourable contribution of the mind in perception, it was still an attempt to resolve the man — nature opposition within an empiricist framework, since it is clearly based on the assumption of nature's power to shape man's mind, tracing this shaping influence back to childhood.

Whether Coleridge would have remained satisfied with this largely necessitarian account of the formation of the human mind if he had not come into contact with German thought, may be doubted, if only because it implies a rather fatalistic acceptance of his own inability to benefit from nature's influence. This does not, however, detract from the conclusion that his position in 1798 was still firmly rooted in empiricism.

The tenacity with which Coleridge clung to his empiricist ideas appears the more clearly if a comparison is made with Wordsworth's views as they emerge from, for instance, 'Peter Bell' and 'Tintern Abbey'. Much more readily than Coleridge, Wordsworth was prepared to recognize a constitutive function of the mind in perception.

To avoid misunderstanding, it may be added that he did not conceive of external nature as the mechanical world of Locke and Newton, but as a living force of divine origin. While Coleridge's view of perception — of the relation between man and nature — was largely empiricist, his view of nature itself — initially founded on the eighteenth century tradition of nature poetry — manifests a significant concurrence with the Neoplatonic tradition which regards the material world as 'an emanation of the absolute; and its beauty [as] the reflection of the absolute'.⁵

It was especially the empiricist element in Coleridge's position that was challenged in his confrontation with continental thought. In order to indicate the divergence of the English and German climates of thought, it is useful

to begin by referring to Deschamps' statement that 'L'humanité peut donc être divisée en deux catégories, celle des idéalistes pour qui l'esprit est véritablement actif et créateur, celle des empiristes pour lesquels il n'est qu'une table rase'.⁶ In the English philosophy and poetry of the eighteenth century a primarily empiricist allegiance may be recognized with the shadow of Locke hovering in the background, while in Germany, under the pervasive influence of Leibnitz and his followers, the idealist, or rationalist tendency predominated. Although this is admittedly such a sweeping generalization that exceptions immediately come to mind (Blake, for instance), it seems valid as an initial representation of the difference between the two cultures in the area of epistemology. J.S. Mill in his famous essay on Coleridge and Bentham describes the difference in similar terms; the relevant passage, too long to be quoted here, is included in the notes.⁷

For a more detailed understanding of this difference, a brief consideration of Leibnitz' *Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain* (1701-1709; first published 1765) may be useful, since in this study Leibnitz comments almost step by step on the views Locke presented in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Thus Leibnitz' study comprises in a nutshell the disparate elements of the empiricist and rationalist views regarding the role sense perceptions play in human cognition.

In February 1801 Coleridge claims to be reading Leibnitz, but, as so often, it is uncertain what and how much.⁸ It may be significant, however, that during this period he was intensely preoccupied with what he calls 'meditations on the relations of Thoughts to Things'.⁹ These meditations gave rise to a not very well argued, almost instinctive antagonism to Locke, and a tentative rejection of mental passivity in perception.¹⁰ Thus it is likely that, directly or indirectly, Coleridge had become acquainted with the basic outlines of Leibnitz' position. This will be treated more fully in the next chapter.

The main bone of contention between Locke and Leibnitz is the problem of the role of the human mind in the acquisition of knowledge. As has been shown, Locke believes that all human knowledge is ultimately derived from sensation, whereas Leibnitz holds that ideas, innate in the mind of man prior to sensation, are the sole basis on which human knowledge is built. This fundamental difference is summarized in Leibnitz' famous addition to Locke's statement, 'Nihil est in intellectu, quod non fuerit in sensu': 'excipe: nisi ipse intellectus'.¹¹

In contrast to Locke, then, Leibnitz does not accord primary importance to knowledge gained through sense perception. In the essay referred to

above, Leibnitz describes sensory data as insufficient in themselves to account for man's acquisition of knowledge. Because there cleaves an element of contingency to them, 'the ideas which come from the senses are confused, and the truths which depend upon them are likewise confused'.¹²

Indeed, Leibnitz goes one step further and denies the possibility of sensory perception independently of the activity of the human mind. Because the mind plays an active and decisive role in perception, then, Leibnitz regards sense data not as immediate knowledge of external objects, but as mediate knowledge, 'The ideas which are said to come from more than one sense, like those of space, figure, motion, rest, are rather from common-sense, that is to say, from the mind itself', 'they are ideas of the pure understanding, but related to externality'.¹³ Thus Leibnitz argues that it is only in man's mind that sense perceptions are formed, and that therefore they are not directly shaped by sensory impulses from outside. In other words, there is a constitutive activity of the mind in perception performed by the 'primitive truths' (such as the principle of contradiction) inherent in the mind prior to sensation.¹⁴ These 'primitive truths' Leibnitz describes as the 'eternal laws of God' engraved on the human soul.¹⁵

Even in perception, then, Leibnitz attributes a major role to the mind. A rejection of this would in his view entail a basically materialist conception of mind as an extension or attribute of matter, 'by what means can experience and the senses give ideas? Has the soul windows, does it resemble tablets, is it like wax? It is plain that all who so regard the soul, represent it as at bottom corporeal'.¹⁶

Sensory ideas are the result of the mind's shaping and ordering of the inchoate influxes of sense, and because of their hybrid or mediate character they are of minor validity compared to the pure ideas inherent in the mind itself, 'For the soul is a little world, in which distinct ideas [i.e. the 'primitive truths' mentioned before] are a representation of God, and in which confused ideas are a representation of the universe'.¹⁷ The mind itself, then, contains distinct ideas, independent of sensation, which 'are nothing else than the attributes of God'.¹⁸ Among these distinct, innate ideas Leibnitz includes, 'being, substance, unity, identity, cause, perception, reason, and many other notions which the senses cannot give'.¹⁹ Although these innate ideas are 'not at first known clearly and distinctly as such',²⁰ they can be discovered by the employment of reason, while 'the senses can hint at, justify, and confirm these truths, but cannot demonstrate their infallible and perpetual certainty'.²¹

Ultimately, then, Leibnitz considers reality insofar as it can be known by man as primarily of a mental, or rational character. In this connection it is telling that although his notion of pre-established harmony — a largely unconscious correspondence between mind and body — evinces an unequivocal acceptance of the existence of matter, he affirms that 'by no argument can it be absolutely demonstrated that there are bodies',²² a statement he would certainly not be prepared to make with regard to minds or souls.

It will be clear that Leibnitz virtually reverses the terms of Locke's empiricism, 'if the soul is passive, it is also without life'.²³ J. Cottingham summarizes the difference between the two philosophers as follows, 'For Locke, the mind is essentially a passive receptor ... The basic underlying picture is of the external world acting on the mind. To this Leibnitz opposes an essentially active conception of the mind; indeed, there is a sense ... in which it is the external world that is contained or reflected in the mind of the individual'.²⁴ As will also appear from the remainder of this chapter, this disagreement between Locke and Leibnitz is fundamental to the divergence of English and German thought in the course of the eighteenth century.

Spinoza enjoyed great popularity in Germany at the time of Coleridge's visit. In 1798, Friedrich Schlegel wrote, 'Jede Philosophie der Philosophie, nach der Spinoza kein Philosoph ist, muss verdächtig scheinen',²⁵ while two years later his enthusiasm seems only to have increased, 'In der Tat, ich begreife kaum, wie man ein Dichter sein kann, ohne den Spinoza zu verehren, zu lieben und ganz der seinige zu werden'.²⁶

It may seem strange to discuss Spinoza as part of the "German influence" on Coleridge, yet this is justified since it is likely that the Spinoza Coleridge was to become so interested in, is not the philosopher as he is presented in contemporary philosophical studies, but as he was interpreted in Germany at the time. Coleridge's first reading of Spinoza probably dates from 1799,²⁷ and may have been connected with his project to write a life of Lessing²⁸ who, as Jacobi claimed, became a Spinozist towards the end of his life.²⁹

There seems something decidedly ironic about the German romantics' veneration of Spinoza, whose detached reasonings seem to have nothing in common with their impassioned expositions. There is certainly an element of distortion in the way they interpreted Spinoza's rationalist system. This cannot be discussed in detail here, however; attention will only be paid to those aspects of his philosophy which appealed to the German romantics

and which are relevant to the object of this study.

Spinoza distinguishes three ways of acquiring knowledge: through the senses, through reason, and through "intuition". He conceived rather lowly of knowledge derived from sense perception. Without entering into details it may be stated that he believed that sense perception provides only inadequate knowledge to be rectified and emended by the employment of reason. On this level the 'imaginatio' is operative which Spinoza regarded as wholly passive and producing only distorted knowledge. This imperfect knowledge acquired through the senses must be remedied by the human intellect.³⁰ Spinoza's conception of the 'imaginatio' is thus a far cry from the romantic veneration of the imagination. Indeed, the romantic imagination bears a much greater resemblance to Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, 'scientia intuitiva'.

Friedrich Schlegel probably refers to this intuitive science, when he speaks of Spinoza's philosophy as 'der allgemeine Grund und Halt'³¹ of the type of poetry he advocated in his *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800), which he describes as growing 'von selbst aus der unsichtbaren Urkraft der Menschheit hervor, wenn der erwärmende Strahl der göttlichen Sonne sie trifft und befruchtet'.³² Spinoza made rather high claims for the possibilities of the 'scientia intuitiva': it enables man to acquire no less than 'an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God'.³³ Intuitive science originates in the divine,³⁴ leads man to the greatest possible happiness,³⁵ and ultimately to the eternal spiritual love of God.³⁶ Schlegel's references to the "unsichtbare Urkraft" and "erwärmender Strahl der göttlichen Sonne" may be taken as rather exuberant descriptions of this intuitive science. As C. de Deugd has shown, Spinoza can hardly substantiate these impressive claims of the virtually unbounded possibilities of intuitive science,³⁷ but, as Schlegel's remarks indicate, the German romantics accepted them unreservedly and enthusiastically.

Spinoza, then, furnished the romantics with a cogently argued proof of the existence of a human faculty of divine origin which enables man to reach to the very heights of the divine essence of being. This intuitive science was just the concept the romantics needed to escape from the rationalist implications of Leibnitz' theory of cognition (and, it may be added, from the restrictions Kant's philosophy imposed on human knowledge). As noted above, Leibnitz considered innate ideas as being implanted by God and as such as the ultimate truths accessible to man. Knowledge of these ultimate principles, however, can be attained almost exclusively by means of rational procedures,

'when you ask the means of knowing and examining innate principles, I reply ... that with the exception of the instincts whose reason is unknown, you must try to reduce them to first principles, that is to say, to axioms identical or immediate by means of definitions, which are nothing else than a distinct exposition of ideas'.³⁸ The room Leibnitz here rather obscurely grants to the human instinct, was given theoretical legitimacy and substance by Spinoza's intuitive science.

Spinoza's third kind of knowledge is a more or less necessary consequence of his pantheist concept of *Deus, sive Natura*. Since every mode of being, including man, is a modification of God, it follows that there must be a divine, natural force in man which is a manifestation of his participation in the divine unity of being. This all pervading unity of existence — man, nature, God — is another aspect of Spinoza's philosophy that was celebrated by the romantics as may appear from a final quotation from Friedrich Schlegel's essay, where he asserts that the only possible subject and object of poetry is furnished by a 'Gedicht der Gottheit, dessen Teil und Blüte auch wir sind — die Erde'.³⁹

If Coleridge read Spinoza three central ideas must have struck him. Firstly, that sense perceptions do not provide man with adequate knowledge — a conclusion he could also have drawn from Leibnitz. Secondly, that man has an inner faculty which makes it possible for him to attain reliable knowledge not only of the natural but also of the supernatural — the fact that for Spinoza natural and supernatural are synonymous does not seem to invalidate this statement. Finally, that in the concept of *Deus, sive Natura* a new basis of contact between man and nature is proposed, in that both are finite manifestations of God.

Kant's influence on Coleridge has been subject to extensive debate and disagreement. Most commentators, however, tend to agree that up to 1803 Coleridge had gained at best only a very partial knowledge of Kant's philosophy. As Orsini puts it, 'In the notes of 1803 we can see Coleridge ... still enmeshed in empiricism, struggling to understand Kant's transcendentalism, and failing to do so at his first attempt, but succeeding later'.⁴⁰ Consequently it will suffice for the purpose of this study to broadly indicate two aspects of Kantian philosophy which would confirm ideas Coleridge might have derived from his reading of Leibnitz and Spinoza.

B. Willey asserts that the main idea Coleridge acquired from Kant — and he is referring to the period around 1801 — was 'that the mind is not

passive in perception ... but active and constituent; that it "half creates" what it perceives, or in other words that the mind imposes its own forms or "categories" upon reality, so that we can only approach reality under those guises (time, space, etc.).⁴¹ This does not mean that Kant questions the objective existence of the external world; he even agrees with Locke that all knowledge begins with sense perception, 'We possess no knowledge which precedes experience in time [i.e. the reception of sensations from external data] and with it everything begins'.⁴² At the same time Kant maintains that the external world is beyond the scope of human knowledge. Man can only know the appearance of the world, which is the result of 'the laws of thinking contributed by our minds and ... the impression which reality makes upon us', as P. Roubiczek puts it.⁴³

Thus Kant steers a middle course between empiricism and rationalism. Nevertheless, since reality can only be accepted as a "given" which cannot be known independently of the activity of man's mind, Kant's whole subsequent endeavour is to determine the role man's mind plays in perception, this being the only part of the process man is capable of knowing. A reading of Kant, then, would have undermined Coleridge's empiricist point of view. By shedding doubt on the human capacity to know the external world in itself and by recognizing the constituent activity of the mind, Kant would have deprived Coleridge of that which he prized most highly: his belief in the divinity of nature of which man should be the passive receptor.⁴⁴

The constitutive function of the mind in perception is performed by a faculty which Kant calls the imagination,⁴⁵

What is first given to us is appearance. When combined with consciousness it is called perception. Now since every appearance contains a manifold, and since different perceptions ... occur in the mind separately and singly, a combination of them *such as they cannot have in sense* is demanded. There must therefore exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of this manifold. To this faculty I give the name Imagination.

In his discussion of the sublime Kant recognizes a second function of the imagination. When man is overwhelmed by the manifestation of infinite power in nature — such as 'Bold overhanging and threatening rocks'⁴⁶ — he is confronted with something that points beyond the world of ordinary perceptions, and which thus raises 'the forces of the soul above the height of vulgar commonplace'⁴⁷ towards the ultimate, regulative ideas of Reason, which are the freedom of the Will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. As Warnock affirms, 'the role of the imagination here is

to lead us beyond what is present to our senses towards the realization that there is something *signified* by the things before us, something which we can grasp in a way, but cannot express'.⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that Kant regards this aspect of the imagination as being preeminently active in the man of genius, enabling him to transcend the world of everyday experience.⁴⁹ Although Kant is more cautious in his claims for this function of the imagination, it resembles Spinoza's concept of intuitive science; both philosophers assume the existence of a mental faculty by means of which man is capable of transcending the world perceived by the senses.⁵⁰

It is now possible to draw some tentative conclusions. Since it is unknown what Coleridge actually read, let alone what he understood, the effect of his first confrontation with continental philosophy can only be described in cumulative terms. Clearly, the basic tendency of the ideas Coleridge encountered in Germany runs in a direction opposed to the empiricist assumptions of his thought up to 1798. What emerges from a reading of these philosophers is firstly, the idea of a constitutive, shaping activity of the mind in perception, and secondly the notion of a mental power inherent in man — whether it is called reason, intuitive science, or imagination — which enables him to approach the divine reality beyond sense.⁵¹ It will not be necessary to repeat what has been argued about the fundamental difference between England and the continent in this respect.

This epistemological difference almost inevitably gives rise to a different appreciation of the role external nature is to play in poetry. In order to show this, some attention must be paid to German aesthetic theory. Again, it is not known what exactly Coleridge read, but it is reasonable to suppose that he read Schiller. Not only did his first intention to travel to Germany grow out of his wish to translate Schiller,⁵² but his translation of *Wallenstein* indicates that he had not wholly relinquished this project after his visit. Besides, Schiller's aesthetic theories were very influential in Germany and reflected ideas which were apparently "in the air" in the last decade of the eighteenth century.⁵³

Since Coleridge translated poems of both Schiller and Matthisson,⁵⁴ a good place to begin a discussion of Schiller is his review of Matthisson's poetry (1794). R. Wellek sums up the conclusions of this review as follows, 'there cannot be such a thing as nature poetry. There is nothing definite and necessary about nature unless the poet by a "symbolic operation" changes inanimate nature into human nature. This, according to Schiller, can be

achieved in two ways: either by musical effects in poetry, by an exploitation of the analogy that exists between the movements of our minds and appearances in nature, or by using nature as a symbol of ideals, as "living language of spirits", a "symbol of the internal harmony of the mind with itself".⁵⁵ From this it appears that Schiller is not interested in nature for its own sake, but that he regards it as an extension or "symbolic language" of man's mind. Therefore it is often difficult to determine whether in speaking about nature he is referring to human or external nature; as G.A. Wells states, 'He purports to be using the word "nature" in the same sense, whether he talks of the nature of minerals or of man'.⁵⁶

This is especially apparent in his letters *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1793-1795). In his twenty-fifth letter Schiller starts out by describing mankind 'in seinem ersten physischen Zustande',⁵⁷ at a time when, as it were, Kant's (constructive) imagination was not yet operative. It was a time when object and subject were truly one, when man was completely determined by nature,⁵⁸ 'In dieser dumpfen Beschränkung irrt er durch das nachtvolle Leben, bis ... die Reflexion [one page further he attributes this activity to the imagination⁵⁹] ihn selbst von den Dingen scheidet und im Widerscheine des Bewusstseins sich endlich die Gegenstände zeigen'.⁶⁰ By means of this "reflection" the world around man takes shape and he enters into a subject-object relation with nature.

This curious theory about the beginnings of the human race — about which Schiller himself also seems somewhat doubtful⁶¹ — is less important than that the emergence of external nature is described as a change in the mind of man, 'Sobald es Licht wird in dem Menschen, ist auch ausser ihm keine Nacht mehr',⁶² and Schiller significantly adds, 'kein Wunder, wenn die uralten Dichtungen von dieser grossen Begebenheit im Innern des Menschen als von einer Revolution in der Aussenwelt reden'.⁶³ Thus the nature man perceives is regarded as being produced and determined by the state of his mind.⁶⁴ It need hardly be argued that this view of nature — whether internal or external makes little difference — is diametrically opposed to Coleridge's belief in the passive receptivity of man towards nature. Nature poetry as Coleridge wanted to write it, Schiller would probably have considered a contradiction in terms or, perhaps better, a confusion of cause and effect.

It falls beyond the scope of this study to enter into a discussion of the relation between the rather negative conception of the original one-ness of subject and object in the aesthetic letters and Schiller's more positive attitude to "naive" poetry in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795).⁶⁵

"Naive" poetry expresses a complete unity of man and nature as appears from Schiller's famous statement about the naive poet, 'Das Objekt besitzt ihn gänzlich, sein Herz liegt nicht wie ein schlechtes Metall gleich unter der Oberfläche, sondern will wie das Gold in der Tiefe gesucht sein. Wie die Gottheit hinter dem Weltgebäude, so steht er hinter seinem Werk: er ist das Werk, und das Werk ist er'.⁶⁶ Although this assertion is somewhat ambiguous, it seems that the world of objects, at least insofar as it is incorporated in the poet's work, is here again presented as a reflection of man's mind or "heart". It is implicitly suggested that the heart of the poet, hidden in the depth of nature, is, as it were, the godhead behind the world of nature.

While "naive" poetry implies unity, "sentimental" poetry expresses estrangement; man "entfernt sich ... durch die Freiheit seiner Phantasie und seines Verstandes von der Einfalt, Wahrheit und Notwendigkeit der Natur".⁶⁷ Not content to remain on the level of nature, man strives after the ideal. This ideal is a renewed unity with nature on a higher plane: no longer determined by it, but completely free from it, while at the same time being in perfect harmony with it, 'wenn der Wille das Gesetz der Notwendigkeit frei befolgt ... geht das Göttliche oder das Ideal hervor'.⁶⁸ The road towards this ideal synthesis of human freedom and nature necessitates at least a temporary separation of man and nature. It is the burden of the "sentimental" artist to accept this alienation while constantly striving for an ideal, renewed unity with nature.⁶⁹

Thus "sentimental" poetry is inevitably a poetry of the mind, 'Das naive Dichtergenie bedarf also eines Beistandes von aussen, da das sentimentalische sich aus sich selbst nährt und reinigt'.⁷⁰ Nature is still important to the "sentimental" poet,⁷¹ but it is a nature which corresponds to the poet's inner being which projects itself on the objects of nature, 'Wir erhalten auf diese Art nie den Gegenstand, nur, was der reflektierende Verstand des Dichters aus dem Gegenstand machte'.⁷² This means that, paradoxically, "sentimental" poetry expresses alienation from nature in nature poetry, nature becoming a symbol or analogy of man's mind.

It is almost impossible to place Coleridge's conception of nature poetry in this framework of thought, so wide is the gulf between the two. Schiller would probably have regarded Coleridge's position as a retrogression to a type of "naive" poetry which even in that category would rank rather low. Although Schiller also acknowledges the attractiveness of a harmonious unity with nature, this should in his view be only another asset to realize the ideal synthesis and should not tempt man to fall back on a "naive" unity since

'Jene Natur, die du dem Vernunftlosen beneidest, ist keiner Achtung, keiner Sehnsucht wert. Sie liegt hinter dir, sie muss ewig hinter dir liegen'.⁷³

In Schiller, then, the artistic consequences of the German philosophical climate, so different from that in England, become apparent. It gives rise to a conception of nature poetry which, at least in theory, is the opposite of Coleridge's. The latter stresses the importance of nature as a divine influence and, ideally, man's passive submission to it, while the former emphasizes the priority of mind and can only hope that man will make nature divine by the activity of his mind.

After this brief consideration of certain key notions in continental philosophy and aesthetics, the question as to the possible influence on Coleridge of German nature poetry remains. Coleridge's remarks and translations suggest that his acquaintance with German poetry was rather limited; only one poet seems to have been studied by him in any detail.⁷⁴ This is Friedrich Leopold, count of Stolberg (1750-1819), a member of the *Göttinger Dichterbund*, a minor poet of the *Sturm und Drang* type.

Since he wrote much nature poetry, Stolberg will serve (and suffice) as an illustration of the difference between English and German nature poetry. Reading through Stolberg's poems, it is difficult to find a fragment that even faintly resembles English nature poetry. The following fragment of 'Hymne an die Erde' is as close as I could come,

Sanfte Ruhe wandelt in deinen friedsamem Thalen;
Steile Gebirge sind reicher an kühnen Thaten und Freiheit.
Sie, des Weisen Wunsch, der Spott des klügelnden Sklaven,
Wählte die schneeigen Alpen, um Muth und Einfalt zu segnen. (p.518)

Nature is associated with gentle quietness and simplicity: it seems to breathe the spirit of freedom and if not quite moral goodness, at least courage.

A closer look reveals, however, that there is very little nature in this fragment: it is almost wholly described in human categories. In fact, nature in Stolberg's poetry seems to be little more than a device for the evocation of human emotions, especially 'Begeisterung', a feeling of rapture and bliss. To give only a few random examples, 'Dort im wehenden Hain wohnt die Begeisterung' ('Der Harz'), 'Du gabst mir Schwingen hoher Begeisterung' ('Der Genius'), 'die hohe Begeisterung/ Schwebet und weht im Säuseln und Braussen des heiligen Haines' ('Hymne an die Erde'). Usually this blissful enthusiasm finds its expression in exclamations like 'Heiliges Land, dich grüss' ich aus überwallender Fülle/ Meines schwellenden Herzens' ('Hymne

an die Erde').

Even from these few isolated fragments it may have appeared that Stolberg is not so much interested in nature as in his own emotions and sensibility. These emotions he imposes on the very generalized natural scenery of his poems. The following lines of 'Hymne an die Erde' could be read as a short description of Stolberg's treatment of, and attitude to, nature:⁷⁵

Ach, du säuselst Wonne mir zu, und thauest mir Wehmuth
In das Herz, das Wehmut und Wonn', aus schmelzender Seele,
Sich in Thränen und Dank und heiligen Liedern ergiessen. (p.515)

It may be concluded that Stolberg's descriptions of nature are largely stereotypes, and that not nature but his own highly strung feelings are his main concern. The early Goethe may have had this type of poetry in mind when he refers to the role of nature in poetry as 'eine Sprache, in welcher sich der Geist des Sprechenden unmittelbar ausdrückt und bezeichnet'.⁷⁶

In this chapter an attempt has been made to indicate some of the new ideas Coleridge may have encountered during his stay in Germany. There Coleridge was confronted with a way of thinking that differed fundamentally from his own. In the years after his trip he tried to come to terms with these new ideas. These years are characterized by a state of grave doubt, confusion and bewilderment, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter on the basis of the evidence afforded by his letters and notebooks.

CHAPTER VIII

A MOVEMENT AWAY FROM EMPIRICISM, TOWARDS THE 'ONE LIFE' IDEA: 1799-1803

In this chapter Coleridge's development up to 1803 insofar as it can be deduced from his letters and notebook entries will be analysed. In the course of this period a fundamental change in Coleridge's ideas took place, partly due, no doubt, to the general, cumulative influence of his confrontation with the German cultural climate. The conclusions of this analysis will serve as a background for an interpretation of the poems he wrote in 1802, notably 'Dejection: an Ode' and 'The Picture'.

Two preliminary observations should be made. Firstly, care has been taken not to read continental ideas into Coleridge's statements; as Prickett warns, 'It is fatally easy to build a picture of Coleridge through his sources, and lose sight of the creative mind at the centre'.¹ Secondly, it is inevitable that in discussing a period of change and doubt one presents a more orderly and coherent picture than is warranted by the material. In view of this it is useful to quote Coleridge's own description of his state of mind at the beginning of 1801,²

I have been *thinking* vigorously during my Illness — so that I cannot say, that my long long wakeful nights have been all lost to me. The subject of my meditations has been the Relations of Thoughts to Things, in the language of Hume, of Ideas to Impressions: I may truly be described in the words of Descartes. I have been "res cogitans, id est, dubitans, affirmans, negans, pauca intelligens, multa ignorans, volens, nolens, imaginans etiam et sentiens —".

This statement could serve as a motto of the entire period. For clarity's sake I will arrange the evidence of the letters and notebooks around two focal points, namely the so-called philosophical letters (February, 1801) and Coleridge's famous letter to Sotheby of September 10, 1802.

In February 1801 Coleridge wrote four philosophical letters in which his main objective was to show 'that Mr Locke's whole System, as far as it is a system, pre-existed in Des Cartes',³ preparatory to an exposition of '*my*

meditations on the relations of Thoughts to Things',⁴ an exposition which unfortunately never followed. I do not know whether in these letters Coleridge made extensive use of background materials — he mentions with his customary indefiniteness that he read 'a very small book, attacking the Essay'⁵ — but since the letters exhibit a rather curious amalgam of disinterested analysis and anti-Lockean prejudice it may be assumed that they are mainly a representation of his own views.

Coleridge summarizes his argument in these letters as follows,⁶

It has been made to appear then, I think, that Des Cartes & Locke held precisely the same opinions concerning the original Sources of our Ideas. They both taught, nearly in the same words and wholly to the same Purpose, that the Objects of human Knowledge are either Ideas imprinted on the Senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly Ideas formed by the help of Memory and Imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid Ways.

Stated as generally as this, these remarks are on the whole justified. Coleridge refers to Locke's assertion that 'All ideas come from Sensation or Reflection', that is either from external objects or from 'the perception of the operations of our own mind within us',⁷ and on this issue he finds no significant difference between Locke and Descartes.

It will be clear, however, that Coleridge's statement is so general and indeterminate that one would be hard put to discover a seventeenth or eighteenth century philosopher who would seriously object: of course, all ideas either stem from within or without, but by affirming that both Descartes and Locke accepted this, one has hardly shown that their philosophies are basically similar. To be sure, there are significant areas of agreement between Locke and Descartes,⁸ but in the area of epistemology their views differ markedly: Locke gives priority to the senses, while Descartes argues that an unshakable foundation of knowledge can only be supplied by the operations of man's mind. On this basis Descartes builds his proof of the existence of God, which in turn provides the certainty of the objective existence of the external world.⁹

Although in these letters Coleridge gives a correct representation of Descartes' notion of innate ideas,¹⁰ he seems to be unaware of its decisive importance when he writes that 'these Innate Ideas were Men of Straw, or scarcely so much as that'.¹¹ Here it becomes apparent what Coleridge is in fact doing: he is equating Descartes' innate ideas with Locke's ideas of reflection. This means that he is interpreting Descartes in a Lockean way, or, in

other words, that he imposes an empiricist framework of thought on Descartes' philosophy.¹² While Coleridge ostensibly wishes to demonstrate that Locke was at best a minor philosopher, he in fact reveals the extent to which he still adheres to empiricist principles.

This conclusion is supported by his surprising statements concerning Descartes' position in the history of philosophy. In one place he claims that Descartes was a predecessor of Hartley,¹³ while in another letter he affirms that 'I could make it evident, that the Cartesian is *bonâ fide* identical with the Berkleian Scheme, with this Difference that Des Cartes has developed it more confusedly', Descartes' system thus being 'a *drossy* Berkleianism'.¹⁴ By placing Descartes unambiguously in the empiricist tradition — Locke's *Essay* being regarded as no more than a faint and unworthy echo of his philosophy — Coleridge indirectly demonstrates his own persistent allegiance to empiricism; as Orsini puts it, "These letters consist of an attack on Locke's originality, not on his philosophy; they make no reference to Kant and seem to be based still on Hartley".¹⁵

The treatment of Descartes in these letters may serve as another warning not to attach too much importance to Coleridge's sources when attempting to understand his own position. It clearly appears that he was reading Descartes through glasses coloured by his own preconceptions so that he arrived at his own subjective version of Descartes' philosophy. It is impossible to know Coleridge's conception of Descartes' philosophy beyond what can be ascertained from his own statements.¹⁶

These letters also show that Coleridge's initial reaction to continental thought was certainly not one of ready acceptance. Two years after his visit to Germany, at a time when he claims to be reading Leibnitz and Kant and allegedly had already studied Spinoza,¹⁷ there is still an unmistakable empiricist undertone in his writings. Nevertheless new elements start finding their way into Coleridge's thought and although by February 1801 this had not yet led to a rejection of empiricism, there is every indication that he is reconsidering the role man's inner powers play in their encounter with nature. This gradual movement away from empiricism will be discussed on the basis of his letter to Sotheby of September 1802.

In this letter Coleridge criticizes Bowles' poetry because of its 'perpetual trick of *moralizing* every thing'; he outlines his objections as follows,¹⁸

but never to see or describe any interesting appearance in nature, without connecting it by dim analogies with the moral world, proves faintness of Impression. Nature has her proper interest; & he will know what it is, who

believes & feels, that every Thing has a Life of it's own, & that we are all *one Life*. A Poet's *Heart & Intellect* should be *combined, intimately combined & unified* with the great appearances in Nature — & not merely held in solution & loose mixture with them, in the shape of formal Similies.

It appears that Coleridge's reverence towards nature has not diminished: it constitutes the basis of his objection to Bowles' nature poetry. Nature is important in itself irrespective of any "lesson" the poet might wish to deduce from it. This at least suggests that he still gives priority to sense; nature itself is important, not the conclusions it gives rise to in the poet's mind.

When he comes to consider the question as to how the poet can acquire an understanding of nature in itself, however, he propounds a completely new answer. Around 1798 he would still have claimed that man can benefit from nature by passively opening up his mind to its influence, all mental activity implying interference and alienation. Now he affirms that man can get to know nature by "believing and feeling" the essential unity of all life, of man and nature. The words "believing and feeling" point to a recognition of a conscious mental activity on man's part. This admission of mental activity is confirmed by another passage of this letter where Greek and Hebrew poetry are compared to the detriment of the former. Greek poetry is at best 'but Fancy, or the aggregating Faculty of the mind', whereas Hebrew poetry is characterized by '*Imagination, or the modifying, and co-adunating Faculty*'.¹⁹

Two new elements may thus be recognized in Coleridge's position: his emphasis on the fundamental unity of all life, man and nature, and his acceptance of mental activity, attributed to the imagination, as an indispensable element in the poet's endeavour to understand nature in its own right. But this is too general to be very useful. In order to arrive at a fuller understanding of these two new tendencies in Coleridge's thought, and of the way in which they are connected, it is necessary to consider the various statements he makes about these issues in his letters and notebooks between 1799 and 1803. His statements about the imagination will be discussed first.

In 1800 there is a first indication that Coleridge is considering the possibility of an activity of the human mind in perception. In his notebook he writes,²⁰

N.B. What is it that makes the silent *bright* of the Morning vale so different from that other silence & bright gleams of late evening? Is it in the mind or is there any physical cause?

In this entry he raises the problem whether man's knowledge of the time of

day unconsciously colours or even determines his perception of external nature. In other words, he wonders to what extent the mind is actively interpreting sense impressions in the very act of perception.

A similar suggestion is carried by an entry of December 1800,²¹

To think of a thing is different from to perceive it, as "to walk" is from "to feel the ground under you" — ... a succession of perceptions accompanied by a sense of *nisus* & purpose.

Coleridge seems to argue that if man "perceived" without "thinking", that is without mental activity, he could never experience anything beyond a succession of sensations. Man's sense impressions can only tell him that "he feels the ground under him", so that even a simple statement like "I walk" already implies that his mind has been actively interpreting these sensations. Consequently, if one "sees" somebody walking, this perception can only be the result of a combination of sense impressions and mental interpretation.

In the first months of 1801 Coleridge is intensely preoccupied with this issue. That a direct or indirect influence of Leibnitz plays a certain role in this, is suggested by a notebook entry which records the following sentence of Christian Wolff, an important propagator of Leibnitz' philosophy, 'Imaginatio quoque in actum percipionis influit'.²² It would be self-defeating, however, to infer a detailed knowledge, let alone an acceptance of Leibnitz' philosophy from this one sentence. What this statement signified to Coleridge may be deduced from a slightly later entry,²³

It seems to elucidate the Theory of Language, Hartley, just able to speak a few words, making a fire-place of stones, with stones for fire — four stones — fire-place — two stones — fire —/ arbitrary symbols in Imagination.

In this entry he recalls how his son Hartley while playing built a fire-place consisting of four stones, putting two stones in the middle "symbolizing" fire. Hartley, Coleridge argues, was apparently not disturbed by the fact that both fire and fire-place consisted of stones: he "perceived" the two stones in the middle as fire, indicative of the role the imagination played in Hartley's perception.

In March 1801 Coleridge is ready to formulate the theoretical consequences of these observations,²⁴

Newton was a mere materialist — *Mind* in his system is always passive — a lazy Looker-on on an external World. If the mind be not *passive*, if it be indeed made in God's image, & that too in the sublimest sense — the Image of the *Creator* — there is ground for suspicion, that any system built on the passiveness of mind must be false, as a system.

By this time, then, he has more or less come to accept the mind's activity in perception which he attributes to the imagination.

This acknowledgement might have led to the complete overthrow of his former empiricist leanings in the direction of some form of Spinozist rationalism or German idealism, but apparently this does not happen. He attempts to incorporate this new insight in his empiricist position along the following lines. Given that the imagination is active in perception, and given that external nature is essentially divine revelation, it necessarily follows that man should employ his imagination in such a way that it may increase — or at least does not interfere with — his susceptibility to the divine forces of nature. This hypothetical line of argument is suggested by the wording of the statement, quoted above, that 'A Poet's *Heart & Intellect* should be *combined, intimately combined & unified* with the great appearances in Nature'.

In a sense, this is nothing but a somewhat more sophisticated version of his former notion of passivity: only "he will know what nature is" who attunes his mind, actively or passively, to its influxes. Yet it should not be overlooked that the recognition of mental activity in perception forces Coleridge to reconsider the relation between man and nature. In his former view man was ideally a passive extension of nature, a lyre upon which the divine wind of nature played. But now that the mind actively participates in the encounter with nature, it is inevitable to assume a principle of unity beyond both mind and nature which may serve as a basis of meaningful contact. If this principle were not there, the conclusion could hardly be avoided that all that can really be known is the perception as it appears in the mind, nature becoming an unknowable world beyond. Consequently, the notion of a divine, external nature would lose much of its force and would probably have to be relinquished in the end. Some sort of principle of a pre-established unity between man and nature, then, is required, if one does not want external nature to be swallowed up by man's mind, if one wants to adhere to the beneficial, divine influence of nature.

Considerations such as these constitute the background of Coleridge's adoption of the 'one Life' idea. This is borne out by the way he presents it, 'Nature has her proper interest; & he will know what it is, who believes & feels, that every Thing [including man²⁵] has a Life of it's own, & that we are all *one Life*'. Thus Coleridge's recognition of mental activity virtually compels him to assume a fundamental unity beyond mind and matter. The alternative is some form of subjectivism, which would imply the abandoning

of all his beliefs about the importance of external nature.

Since a 'one Life' notion in itself is very vague and may take various widely differing forms, I will trace as specifically as possible what Coleridge means when he asserts that 'we are all *one Life*'. Too often, 'one Life' is taken as an indefinite, vaguely mystical quality beyond rational description or comprehension. But although there clings a religious, mystical aspect to the 'one Life' idea, it should be emphasized that Coleridge would only be satisfied with *vague* mysticism as a last resort.

This already appears from the first notebook entry concerned with unity (November, 1799) in which Coleridge states his intention of writing a poem on Spinoza which would begin as follows,¹⁶

I would make a pilgrimage to the burning sands of Arabia, or &c &c to find
the Man who could explain to me there can be *oneness*, there being infinite
Perceptions — yet there must be a *oneness*, not an intense Union but an
Absolute Unity, for &c

He is clearly not embracing unity as a vague but comforting concept in this passage, but he is intent on determining what exactly the character of this unity is. That he would have to travel all the way to Arabia to have it revealed to him, indicates that in 1799 he still regards it as rather elusive.

This is also the impression one derives from the rather sweeping request he makes to Davy in June 1800,²⁷

you would do me a great service, if you would briefly state your metaphysical system of Impressions, Ideas, Pleasures, & Pains, the laws that govern them, & the reasons which induce you to consider them as essentially distinct from each other. — My motive for this request is the following — As soon as I settle, I shall read Spinoza & Leibnitz — and I particularly wish to know wherein they agree with, & wherein they differ from, you. (italics mine)

This request clearly shows how important this idea of unity was to Coleridge. Besides, it suggests that his intention to study Spinoza and Leibnitz was no mere coincidence but that he must have been aware that both these philosophers had developed a metaphysical system based on a unity of mind and matter. To what extent he subsequently adopted Spinoza's *Deus, sive Natura* or Leibnitz' pre-established harmony, can of course be assessed only on the basis of his own statements.

In the letter to Sotheby which was taken as the starting point of this discussion Coleridge refers to the 'one Life' idea when he considers the difference between Greek and Hebrew poetry,²⁸

In the Hebrew Poets each Thing has a Life of it's own, & yet they are all one Life. In God they move & live, & *have* their Being — not *had*, as the cold System of Newtonian Theology represents/ but *have*.

This passage reveals an unequivocal rejection of all mechanical deism which regards God as no more than a rather abstract first cause of that giant machine called the universe. Coleridge maintains that God is continuously present in both man and nature. In itself this is, of course, nothing new, as also appears from his reference to Berkeley's favourite Biblical phrase, 'In God they move & live, & *have* their Being' (cf. Acts 17:28).

But the assertion that 'each Thing has a Life of it's own, & yet we are all one Life' represents a new element in his thought, which cannot be reconciled with Berkeley's philosophy. Berkeley would never accept that nature has a life of its own; in fact, he spends much space and argument in demonstrating that nature has no existence independently of God. This new element may very well be connected with his reading of Spinoza's philosophy which regards individual things as finite manifestations, defined by negation, of the infinite divine substance. This is the more likely since at this stage Coleridge considered Spinoza to be a Christian of unsuspected orthodoxy; Spinoza's doctrine with respect to 'the nature of the Being which Creatures possess', he describes as 'truly & severely orthodox, in the reformed Church'.²⁹

It appears that the unity beyond mind and matter for which Coleridge is seeking is intimately connected with his conception of God. This is hardly surprising since it is only the Godhead on which such a unity can be based, or by which it can be supplied. Consequently his conjectures about the nature of the divine Being must be considered in some detail. In this respect, the following remark is illuminating,³⁰

Even the worship of one God becomes Idolatry, in my convictions, when instead of the Eternal & Omnipresent, in whom we live, & move, & *have* our Being, we set up a distinct Jehovah tricked out in the *anthropomorphic* Attributes of Time & *Successive* Thoughts — & think of him, as a PERSON, from whom we *had* our Being ... When we dismiss *three Persons* in the Deity, only by substracting *two*, we talk more intelligibly, but I fear, do not feel more religiously — for God is a Spirit, & must be worshipped in Spirit.

The similarity between this statement and the 'one Life' passage from the letter to Sotheby confirms that Coleridge regarded these issues as closely related.

Some caution is necessary not to read more into this statement than is

actually in it. Coleridge does not assert the impersonality of the Deity here, but rather rejects the tendency to conceive of God in terms of the personal—impersonal opposition. He seems to argue that the nature of God is beyond human knowledge, and that therefore man should not refer to God in human terms. To affirm that God is personal — or, by the same token, impersonal — is to impose anthropomorphic categories on the Godhead.³¹ God is spirit beyond human ken; all that can be affirmed is that this spirit is the omnipresent, sustaining force of all life, man and nature alike.

This is confirmed by a notebook entry of March - July 1803 where John Scotus Erigena is quoted to the following effect,³²

Gregory the Theologian also with many reasons confirms that no substance or essence, whether of a visible or invisible creature can be comprehended as to what it is by the intellect or by reason. For just as God himself in himself as beyond every creature is comprehended by no intellect, so also the οὐσία (essence) considered in the most secret recesses of the creature made by him and existing in him, is incomprehensible.

The same two ideas about the nature of God which were recognized in the previous paragraph reappear here. Firstly, God is spirit, beyond human ken, is incomprehensible; in other words, man cannot acquire knowledge concerning the nature of the Deity by the employment of his intellect or reason and thus man should not make unverifiable statements about God in anthropomorphic terms. Secondly, God is continuously present in his creation as the essence of all (super)natural and human creatures, but, again, this manifestation of the divine in creation is beyond the scope of human reason and understanding. It need hardly be added that this divine manifestation in creation is more or less synonymous with the 'one Life' Coleridge is referring to.

From this it appears that Coleridge regards the 'one Life' as something that cannot be known rationally by man. Yet although man cannot know this life-giving, divine essence, Coleridge seems to think that man can experience it both in nature and in his inner self. The first indication of this is encountered in his famous notebook comment on the following lines from 'Tintern Abbey', with 'the deep power of Joy,/ We see into the life of Things',³³

i.e. By deep feeling we make our *Ideas dim* — & this is what we mean by our Life — ourselves. I think of the Wall — it is before me, a distinct Image — here. I necessarily think of the *Idea* & the Thinking I as two distinct & opposite Things. Now [let me] think of *myself* — of the thinking Being —

the Idea becomes dim whatever it be — so dim that I know not what it is — but the Feeling is deep & steady — and this I call *I* — identifying the Percipient & the Perceived —

In this passage Coleridge describes an experience of the 'life of Things', of the divine essence in terms supposedly borrowed from Fichte. He affirms that in the act of perception he sees the "idea" of the wall — the result of sense impression and the modifying activity of the receiving mind — an image experienced as distinct from the self, as external. But this distinction only applies on the level of perception and reflection, of "ideas". If one goes beyond this, the distinction vanishes, as does the distinct image. If one delves into one's deepest self, beyond "ideas", a feeling of all-pervading unity remains concerning which the distinction between subject and object has ceased to apply. This 'deep & steady' feeling is the experience both of the essence of the self and the essence of the external phenomenon. Thus "feeling" acquires a special significance in Coleridge's thought: it provides the only way of apprehending the divine principle of unity which cannot be comprehended 'by the intellect or by reason'.

The central role accorded to "feeling" also appears from a statement in a letter of August 1803,³⁴

I hold, that association depends in a much greater degree on the recurrence of resembling states of Feeling, than on Trains of Idea. I almost think, that Ideas *never* recall Ideas, as far as they are Ideas — any more than Leaves in a forest create each other's motion — The Breeze it is that runs thro' them / it is the Soul, the state of Feeling.

In the light of the preceding quotation where the image of the wall was called an "idea", it is likely that Coleridge employs the term "idea" here in a comprehensive sense, as referring not only to ideas of reflection but also to those of perception.³⁵ If this is accepted, the image that is used to clarify the priority of feelings over ideas gives an illuminating insight into his position. Ideas are like leaves in a forest whose motions are not occasioned by themselves but by the breeze, the Soul, the life-giving force originating from the divine ground of existence which man experiences as a state of feeling. In other words, all man's ideas — that is all that he thinks and all he perceives, the world "within us and abroad" — obtain their life from "feeling" which consequently is, at least in man's experience, the ultimate, divine essence of all life.

A similar emphasis on the importance of "feeling" is apparent in a passage from a letter of January 1803 in which Coleridge describes his experi-

ences as he climbs a mountain,³⁶

The farther I ascend from animated Nature, from men, and cattle, & the common birds of the woods, & fields, the greater becomes in me the Intensity of the feeling of Life; Life seems to me then a universal spirit, that neither has, nor can have, an opposite. God is every where, I have exclaimed, & works every where; & where is there *room* for Death?

The farther Coleridge is removed from the world of men and nature, that is from the world of "ideas", the more intense is his experience of the 'feeling of Life'. The universal spirit of Life, experienced by man as the 'feeling of Life', is at the same time the principle of unity *beyond* the world of "ideas", and the principle of life operative *in* the world of "ideas".³⁷

I will discuss the consequences of the 'one Life' idea on the basis of the following notebook entry of October 1803,³⁸

Poem on Spirit — or on Spinoza — I would make a pilgrimage to the Deserts of Arabia to find the man who could make understand how the *one can be many*! Eternal universal mystery! It seems as if it were impossible; yet it is — & it is every where! — It is indeed a contradiction *in Terms*: and only in Terms! — It is the co-presence of Feeling & Life, limitless by their very essence, with Form, by its very essence limited — determinate — definite.

The underlying Spinozism of Coleridge's position appears unambiguously from this statement: he regards all "ideas", both mental and "material", as finite manifestations of the divine essence which he takes to be 'Feeling & Life'. In other words, "feeling" is the mode in which man apprehends the principle of life and unity in which the percipient and perceived are identified; "feeling" is the experience of the ground of existence beyond the world of appearance, of "ideas". Similarly, it is only in the world of "ideas" that phenomena are conceived as distinct from each other. This may also be implied in Coleridge's statement that³⁹

it has been my creed ... that Feelings die by flowing into the mould of the Intellect, & becoming Ideas; & that Ideas passing forth into action re-instate themselves again in the world of Life.

It appears, then, that Coleridge adopts a basically Spinozist conception of, on the one hand, the absolute unity of all existence — man, nature, and God — and, on the other, of the diversity which man is continuously aware of in his "ideas", in his sense perceptions and individual thoughts.

Nevertheless, although the over-all scheme of Coleridge's thought seems close to Spinozism, the strong emphasis on "feeling" is foreign to Spinoza's rationalism. To be sure, the emphasis on "feeling" might be Coleridge's

version of the *amor intellectualis Dei*, which is in terms of Spinoza's philosophy the consequence of intuitive science,⁴⁰ since both Coleridge's "feeling" and Spinoza's "amor" constitute the way in which the divine essence reveals itself in the human world.⁴¹ But although this is not wholly impossible, it would amount to a rather curious interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy in which feelings are looked upon with suspicion and the necessity of subjecting them to the discipline of reason is emphasized.

It is more likely that the emphasis on "feeling" derives from the Neoplatonic background of his thought which was already apparent before his journey to Germany. A characteristic aspect of Neoplatonism is the concept of *circuitus spiritualis* which M.H. Abrams describes as follows,⁴²

a powerful current of "love", or cohesive and sustaining supernatural energy, which flows ceaselessly from God down through the successive levels of ever remoter being and circles back to God — the force that holds the universe together and manifests itself to human awareness as the yearning to return to an undivided state.

This Neoplatonic concept of the current of "love" emanating from God, Coleridge was undoubtedly familiar with. He had already encountered it in Akenside's poetry as the 'vital flame', the breath of God which "pervades, quickens, and moves" the material world.⁴³ Similarly, one of the central elements in Cudworth's thought is the concept of "plastick nature" which he describes as the incorporeal radiation of the divine mind which imbues the essentially inert material world with life.⁴⁴ It may be concluded that the philosophical background of Coleridge's 'one Life' idea is a combination of Spinozism and Neoplatonism. This is one more indication that Coleridge did not simply take over views of other thinkers, but that he endeavoured to provide for them within his own system of thought, adapting and changing them in the process.

Coleridge, then, has come to believe that "feeling" is the divine breeze which imparts life to the world both within and without man. Comparison with the wind-harp image of 'The Eolian Harp' indicates the degree to which his position has changed. In the 1796 poem he described man as a lyre played upon by the divine breeze of nature, external reality thus being the all-determining force to which man should be humbly and passively receptive. In 1803 external nature has lost its prerogative of being the main revelation of the divine: both man and nature are considered as limited manifestations of the divine essence which reveals itself pre-eminently in "the state of feeling". Although external nature retains at least part of its divine character, then,

the centre of Coleridge's interest has changed from outer to inner.

It is perhaps surprising that the 'one Life' idea found so little expression in Coleridge's poetry. This can partly be explained by the fact that the 'one Life' idea may be very well in theory, but that it is difficult to conceive how it works out in practice. If the poet holds that "feeling" is the life-giving force in nature, he is confronted with the enigmatic task of giving expression to this "feeling" in his descriptions of nature.

Moreover, to experience the "feeling" of nature means nothing less than to experience the divine ground of unity beyond the appearances of nature, which is certainly no easy matter. As B. Willey rightly points out, this essentially mystical insight into God and nature⁴⁵

can only be purchased at a tremendous price — at the price, indeed, of the temporary extinction of one's separate individuality. To reach it, one must be "laid asleep in body, and become a living soul", and we are told that even Plotinus reached this condition only four or five times in his life.

Abrams makes a remark to the same effect when he states that according to Plotinus, 'Such a return [to the One] is achievable during this life, but only if a man by long discipline succeeds in turning from the outer world inward, and then only passingly, in an ecstasy of union in which all division vanishes'.⁴⁶

Apart from, possibly, 'Kubla Khan' which will be discussed in a separate chapter later, there is only one poem in which Coleridge attempts to give poetic expression to the 'one Life' idea, 'Hymn Before Sunrise' (September, 1802). As he informs Sotheby, the idea of 'Hymn Before Sunrise' was conceived on Sca'fell, where he had an experience of the unity of all creation beyond sense and thought, and he 'involuntarily poured forth a Hymn in the manner of the *Psalms*',⁴⁷

O dread and silent form! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to my bodily eye,
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
I worshipped the INVISIBLE alone.
Yet thou meantime, wast working on my soul,
E'en like some deep enchanting melody. (ll. 13-18; 1802 version)

In these lines many aspects of Coleridge's thought that were touched upon in the preceding analysis can be recognized.

The real difficulty he faces, of course, when he has to describe nature itself, when he tries to sing a song of praise to the divine life manifested in nature. The following lines are characteristic of the whole,

Ye Ice-falls! ...

Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven
 Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
 Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with lovely flowers
 Of living blue, spread garlands at your feet? —
 God! God! the torrents like a shout of nations
 Utter! the ice-plain bursts and answers God!
 God, sing the meadow-streams with gladsome voice,
 And pine-groves with their soft and soul-like sound,
 The silent snow-mass, loos'ning thunders God! (ll. 49-64; 1802 version)

However involuntarily this hymn was poured forth, one cannot help feeling that the tone of joyful ecstasy of these lines is somewhat artificial and exaggerated. It is almost as if Coleridge is trying to shout down his inability to give expression to the 'one Life' as it reveals itself to man in nature. At any rate, the nature poetry he writes here closely resembles, is indeed partly based on, "German" poetry of the *Sturm und Drang* type.⁴⁸ These lines suggest that his interest in nature for its own sake has diminished. His main concern is with the feeling of ecstasy which constitutes the unity of man and nature: both the poet and the meadow streams "sing with gladsome voice" the praises of their mutual ground of life.

It may seem rather unsatisfactory to break off the analysis of Coleridge's development at this point. Yet it is clear that from this point onwards nature has ceased to play a central role in his thought since in a rather devious way he has come to accept the priority of mind over nature. This is supported by the fact that after 1803 he virtually ceased to write nature poetry. Since his interest in nature was the impetus behind most of his significant poetry, this also means that after 1803 he was no longer primarily a poet, becoming a metaphysician instead.

Two things remain to be considered. Firstly, the extent to which the continental sources that were discussed in the preceding chapter played a role in Coleridge's development and, secondly, the role Wordsworth played in this process. It has appeared that Coleridge did not simply adopt continental ideas, but that he — initially rather reluctantly — tried to incorporate them in his own position by adapting them to his own convictions. Nevertheless, in the course of the five years following his trip to Germany the general outline of his beliefs changes from an unmistakable empiricism to his own personal version of Spinozist rationalism, German idealism and Neoplatonism, in which the remnants of his former empiricism are still present but have lost much of their significance.

The reconstruction of this process of change suggests that the decisive

moment occurred in the first months of 1801 when he came to accept the constructive activity of mind in perception. This disavowal of mental passivity was probably due to the cumulative effect of his reading in continental sources: Leibnitz, Schiller, Kant, and many others may have contributed. Although after this date Coleridge still tried to retain his empiricist allegiance to external nature, its importance gradually and probably inevitably decreased. It was finally rendered ineffectual by the 'one Life' notion which by emphasizing the centrality of "feeling" as the basis of unity and life, induced a growing preoccupation with man's inner being.

As Coleridge himself indicated, this 'one Life' idea was primarily based on his adaptation of Spinoza's philosophy. Some aspects of Schiller's concept of "naive poetry", that unconscious celebration of the unity of subject and object, can also be reconciled with it. On the other hand, Kant's significance at this stage seems to be rather minor; specific Kantian notions can hardly be identified in Coleridge's thought up to 1803. The fact that he so persistently refers to "feeling", instead of imagination, as the mode by which the divine can be apprehended, points in a similar direction.⁴⁹

It may be concluded that even though the attribution of specific debts must remain conjectural, the whole tendency and development of Coleridge's thought betrays a pervasive influence of continental thinkers. This strengthens the suspicion that his claim of having arrived at the Schellingian notions of the *Biographia Literaria* independently of his acquaintance with continental thought, should be dismissed.

This does not mean, however, that the impetus behind Coleridge's development was exclusively of continental origin; Wordsworth's influence was probably as important. It is worth noting that some of Wordsworth's assertions in the 1800 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* clearly foreshadow the fundamentals of the 'one Life' idea Coleridge arrived at about two years later. In this Preface Wordsworth refers to 'a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible'.⁵⁰ The similarity is even more remarkable in his description of the poet as 'a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them' (italics mine).⁵¹

It is unlikely that Wordsworth arrived at these assertions on the basis

of a theoretical line of argument. As Willey notes, 'Wordsworth's beliefs ... were largely the formulation of his own dealings with "substantial things"; they were held intellectually only because they had first been "proved upon the pulses"'.⁵² Coleridge was apparently not prepared to accept Wordsworth's beliefs on such a shaky, untheoretical foundation, no matter how much he respected his friend. It is probable, however, that he was the readier to yield to the conclusions which his studies in continental philosophy and aesthetics seemed to force on him, because they coincided with the largely intuitive convictions of his "comforter and guide" with whom he was in frequent communication during the period in question. In this respect, it is also significant that one of the earliest notebook entries relating to the 'one Life' idea is expressly connected with 'Tintern Abbey'. On the whole, the continental and Wordsworth's influence mutually reinforced each other resulting, however, in a position that is not the direct outcome of their combined effect, but that has become characteristically Coleridgean because of his modified adaptation of them.

CHAPTER IX

THE 'ONE LIFE' AND ALIENATION: 'DEJECTION: AN ODE'

This chapter will be concerned with an analysis of 'Dejection: an Ode' in order to establish how Coleridge's theories discussed in the preceding chapter found poetical expression. The interpretation of this poem will reveal a rather wide divergence between theory and practice, between Coleridge's visions of the ideal unity of man, nature, and God, and the extent to which he could realize them in his actual encounter with nature.

Interpretations of 'Dejection: an Ode' can basically be divided into two groups: those which read the poem in primarily philosophical terms and those which emphasize the biographical aspects of the poem. This lack of critical consensus is connected with the dispute about which version of the poem should constitute the basis of one's interpretation. After de Selincourt's publication of the verse letter to Sara Hutchinson in 1927 — a version about twice the length of the published version and written about seven months previous to its publication — most critics assumed that this was the original version of the poem. Consequently, it was surmised that for personal reasons Coleridge suppressed the biographical sections of the verse letter when he published the public version. This conception of the writing history of the poem leads to the idea that the published ode is an incomplete poem which can only be properly understood and interpreted if it is related to its biographical background.

But as G. Dekker has convincingly argued in his detailed study of the poem, it is the more likely supposition that when writing the verse letter, Coleridge made use of fragments written previously — fragments which were later incorporated in the ode — which were interspersed with large sections of impromptu writing of a more personal nature. Since the personal passages of the verse letter are clearly of an inferior quality compared to its "public" sections, the internal evidence for this position is strong.¹ In view of this, I have chosen to concentrate in my discussion on the final version of the poem which does not differ significantly from its first published version in the *Morning Post* (October 4, 1802).²

The structure of 'Dejection: an Ode' mirrors that of earlier poems like 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' and 'Frost at Midnight'. The ode commences with a description of a state of alienation from nature (st. I, II) which induces a contemplative inquiry into the possible causes of this alienation (st. III-VI), leading up to some sort of renewed contact with nature (st. VII, VIII).

Yet in spite of this over-all structural correspondence, a number of significant differences between the ode and the earlier poems must be recognized. Firstly, the passage describing alienation has become much longer and thus receives more emphasis.³ Secondly, the "inner musings" of the central stanzas do not reveal a gradual, ascendant movement preparatory to a renewed contact with nature; the mood and tendency of especially stanza VI seem to confirm rather than alleviate the poet's dejection and alienation. Thirdly, contact with nature is re-established in the final stanzas after a very sudden transition which gives the impression of wanton caprice rather than painfully won renewal. Moreover, the bond with nature achieved in stanza VII seems destructive instead of beneficial. Finally, as in 'Frost at Midnight', the apparently "happy" ending of the ode is accomplished by shifting the attention away from the protagonist: it does not, in fact, amount to more than a beautiful prayer for the lady's well-being.

Not only these general differences attest to the degree to which Coleridge's thought has changed in the intervening years, a similar weight is carried by the introduction of the wind-harp in stanza I, which describes,

the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute.

In 'The Eolian Harp', the harp was used as a device to register the life of nature, and the burden of the poem was that the poet, like the harp, should be passively receptive of nature's pure life. In these lines the harp still reveals the life of nature, but since the poet in his 'wan and heartless mood' is incapable of apprehending this life, the harp now indicates his alienation from nature. The quickening movement of the last line appropriately suggests irritation, frustration, and a rejection of his former confidence.

The description of the moon points in a similar direction,

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)

I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.

As some critics have noted, this description of the moon aptly images the position Coleridge outlines in stanzas IV and V. Since the "old moon" is visible because of the reflection of light from the earth on the moon, it follows that, as R. Parker puts it, 'in our perception of the "phantom" earth-light swimming over the moon's shadowy surface, we are in effect receiving what we give. Correspondingly, the bright crescent reflects onto the surface of the earth what we call moonlight; both lights are, of course, derived from the sun', which means that the image announces 'a pervasive, continuous flow of divine energy and solicitude'.⁴

If this ingenious interpretation of the moon image is accepted, it is all the more remarkable that to the dejected poet this exceptional configuration of the moon suggests almost its opposite; instead of indicating a divine life within and abroad, he regards the moon as a warning of the approach of storm and rain.⁵ The wind-harp might have assured the poet of a divine life in nature, the moon is as good a sign of divine omnipresence as one could hope for, yet the poet's alienation is apparently so persistent and confirmed that he wishes the harp to be silent and interprets the moon as presaging destruction.

Stanza II develops the contrast between the life of nature suggested by the beautiful, exact, but somewhat understated description of the evening sky, and the inner lifelessness of the poet who "sees, not feels" nature's beauty. In stanza III Coleridge draws out the implications of the situation he has so carefully and suggestively built up in the first two stanzas,

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

In these lines the poet takes stock of his situation and acknowledges that no solution can be expected from external nature. Even if he were to gaze forever, there would be no guarantee that he would ever be able to apprehend the life of nature. In other words, the poet realizes that external nature, however full of divine life it may be in itself, is powerless to cure him of his

dejection, is incapable of communicating its life to him. His only hope lies within himself, in activating his inner fountains of life by means of which he might eventually re-establish contact with the life of nature. This recognition is accompanied by a change of emphasis. In the succeeding stanzas the poet is no longer attentive to nature but embarks on a candid introspection in order to determine the cause of his dejection and alienation.

It is noteworthy that the first lines of this third stanza contain an allusion to the following lines of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*,⁶

So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat; Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself. (ll. 594-596)

The situation of Samson has much in common with that of the poet in the ode. Both have become blind to the life and light of God and nature. As Samson remarks,

Light, the prime work of God, to me extinct
And all her various objects of delight
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased. (ll. 70-72)

By referring to *Samson Agonistes* Coleridge adds a further dimension of pessimism and despondency to his situation: barring miraculous intervention, Samson's blindness was irremediable and his suffering was only relieved when he died. As will be discussed in detail later, this reference forms part of an elaborate pattern of allusions and suggestions indicating the desperate and possibly hopeless nature of his predicament.

In stanzas IV and V Coleridge tries to relate his present plight to his theoretical convictions which he here formulates as follows,

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live;
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

Many ideas discussed in the previous chapter are apparent in these lines. They celebrate the wedding of the "feeling", the divine force, present in nature and a parallel "feeling" stemming from the same source, in man. If man experiences this "feeling" within himself, he can establish a profound union with the "feeling" of nature — the famous 'one Life within us and abroad' — resulting in 'A new Earth and new Heaven'. By the same token, if man is incapable of experiencing this "feeling" with himself, he becomes likewise impervious to the "feeling" of nature and all he perceives is an

'inanimate cold world', a lifeless world wearing a shroud instead of a wedding garment.⁷

In stanza V this "feeling" in man is identified as 'Joy'. Joy is thus the concrete psychological manifestation of the divine force operative in man,

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
 Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
 Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud —
 Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud —
 We in ourselves rejoice!

Joy is both life itself and the force that endows man and nature with life, both cloud and shower, both, presumably, divine in origin and a power which infuses man and nature with divine life. The core of Coleridge's position in these stanzas is, in the words of P. Deschamps, an expression of '*le rappel de l'identité fondamentale entre l'âme de l'homme et l'âme du monde, l'une et l'autre procédant d'une seule et même réalité spirituelle*'.⁸

In stanzas IV and V, then, Coleridge reminds himself of the theoretical ideal which he had developed after much hesitation and confusion in the course of the preceding two years. Yet, since he identifies the divine "feeling" in man as 'Joy' and he himself is dejected, it is clear that in his present predicament he can derive little comfort or hope from it. But there is more. In the way the 'one Life' ideal is presented in these stanzas a lack of balance, perhaps even an admission of defeat, may be recognized. As a harmonious interplay of forces from without and within is fundamental to the 'one Life' notion, it is striking that Coleridge seems almost solely concerned with the "life within".

Since his alienation is due, not to nature, but to his own inability to experience the divine feeling of joy, this preoccupation with his own inner being is certainly understandable. Nevertheless, this strong emphasis on man's contribution has the unexpected, and probably undesired consequence that it gives rise to a position that can hardly be distinguished from a "projectionist" view, as appears from the following lines,

And thence [i.e. from man] flows all that charms or ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colours a suffusion of that light.

In his theoretical observations Coleridge had attempted to salvage the divine life of nature by opting for a balanced interchange of life-forces from within and without, but in practice it appears that man can only experience the divine life of nature if he already feels the divine life within, which thus becomes the all-determining factor. As M. Suther states, 'He is saying that the fountains of passion and life are inside the poet and *only* there, and, by implication, that nature furnishes only inanimate raw material'.⁹

In 'Dejection: an Ode' it becomes apparent that once an active contribution of man in his encounter with nature is accepted, the life of nature, no matter how central in theory, becomes merely of subsidiary importance resulting in a position which, at least in practice, is hardly distinguishable from the subjective idealism Coleridge had endeavoured to eschew in his theories. Thus these stanzas which ostensibly celebrate the ideal marriage of subject and object undermine its very foundation by the way it is put forward. As Stallknecht aptly remarks, the ode 'produces a philosophy which denies the possibility of the very mysticism whose passing it laments'.¹⁰

One other line requires attention in this connection. Coleridge asserts that the indispensable feeling of 'Joy' can only be attained by 'the pure, and in their purest hour'. This idea has, of course, its antecedents in his earlier poetry. In 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', for instance, he had affirmed that 'Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure'. But the statement is much stronger here. Since the pure man experiences joy only in his purest hour, the corollary is that even such a man is usually out of touch with this life-giving force, just as the mystics in spite of all their efforts only rarely achieved the ecstatic union with the divine.

If Coleridge's reservation is taken at its face value, and not merely as a rhetorical celebration of purity, the exuberant description of the joyful marriage of God, man, and nature is almost converted into a cry of despair and frustration. A despair, which derives a keener edge from the jubilant tones in which this marriage feast, so difficult to attend, is presented; the happier the state which is virtually unattainable is envisioned, the keener its loss and absence will be felt. It may be concluded that Coleridge's theoretical convictions as they are outlined in these stanzas do not in any way help him in conquering his dejection and alienation, do not provide him with a way out of his difficulties, and consequently his plight in stanza VI is even more desperate.

Besides his theoretical beliefs which have proved powerless, there remains one other source of hope: his memories of former meaningful and

joyful encounters with nature. To these he reverts at the beginning of stanza VI, only to reject them at once, in spite of all the hope and comfort Wordsworth in his immortality ode had claimed to derive from them. To make his point unmistakably clear, Coleridge echoes the first lines of Wordsworth's ode,

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.

In hindsight, the now thoroughly dejected poet affirms that his former hope and joy in nature had probably been without foundation and rather encroached on reality than revealed it in its true light. This hope which had been the sustaining cause of his happiness, he now dismisses as irrational (cf. 'not my own'), and a life without hope is laid down as a more viable alternative: life in dejection and alienation may not be exactly enviable, but at least it is realistic in that it is not based on mere wishful thinking. As H. Bloom rightly concludes, '*Dejection* overtly rejects the dialectic of Wordsworth's memory as salvation'.¹¹

In these lines, then, Coleridge takes a giant step away from all he had cherished before. He implies that all the joys he had formerly believed to be, and experienced, as inherent in nature, might very well have been occasioned by the hopes and happiness he had felt within himself; in other words, that it was his own inner happiness which enabled him to experience the joys of nature and that nature was "really" no more than an extension of his own subjective state of feeling, in spite of all his former beliefs and assertions to the contrary. In this stanza, Coleridge has reached the point where he unequivocally admits that no hope of renewal can be derived from external nature, that nature's influence depends to a large extent on his own state of mind. Consequently, the role attributed to nature has radically changed: instead of being an objective, external force inspiring man with divine joy and happiness, it has become a subjective force in that its influence is dependent on the inner feelings of man.

In the next lines of stanza VI the poet claims that there is only one consideration which keeps him from facing up to reality in this sobering way,

But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;

But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.

A life in dejection would be acceptable if it did not destroy his imagination. On the basis of the evidence considered in chapter VIII, imagination here probably refers in a rather general way to the faculty which enables the poet to write poetry. Since dejection implies alienation, it would preclude him from establishing any kind of contact with nature which he could express in poetry: life in dejection, however "realistic", is also deadening.

Imagination is not simply equivalent to the 'Joy' celebrated in stanza V; as G. Dekker states, 'What Coleridge seems to be saying is that Imagination is an inborn human faculty belonging "by nature" to us, but that Joy is a gift of God, given, if at all, to a few select spirits to whom alone Nature is "wedded", and who may or may not be poets'.¹² If man experiences this 'Joy', there is no alienation from nature, and consequently no impairing of the imagination, yet, as also appears from stanza VII, not only joy but any strong feeling may assist the poet in overcoming his alienation and may thus serve as a foundation for the imagination to work upon: dejection deadens, feeling of whatever kind, whether joy or despair, animates and enables the poet to imbue nature with an admittedly subjective meaning.

The interpretation of these lines as a movement towards a greater emphasis on subjectivity and a search for a new, subjective basis for the imagination to work upon, is confirmed by the fact that Coleridge's lines are strongly reminiscent of Werther's complaint in his letter of November 3,¹³ 'Ich leide viel, denn ich habe verloren, was meines Lebens einzige Wonne war, die heilige, belebende Kraft, mit der ich Welten um mich schuf, sie ist dahin!'.¹⁴ The reference to Goethe's *Werther*, whether conscious or unconscious cannot be known and is not important,¹⁵ is remarkably apt and significant.

Werther makes this statement when he has finally accepted that his somewhat overstrained expectations of a future state of bliss with Lotte are doomed to be frustrated. Now that his hopes fail him he feels, like the poet in the ode, 'A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,/ Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,/ In word, or sigh, or tear'; as Werther phrases it, 'Und dies Herz ist jetzt tot, aus ihm fließen keine Entzückungen mehr, meine Augen sind trocken, und meine Sinne, die nicht mehr von erquickenden Tränen gelabt werden, ziehen ängstlich meine Stirn zusammen'.¹⁶

Loss of hope leads to loss of feeling, to an inner death, and this inner

death occasions, also in *Werther*, a radical change of the external world. At the beginning of the novel Werther lived in a world of happiness, beauty and life, now the aspect of the world has become lifeless and meaningless, 'o! wenn da diese herrliche Natur so starr vor mir steht wie ein lackiertes Bildchen, und alle die Wonne keinen Tropfen Seligkeit aus meinem Herzen herauf in das Gehirn pumpen kann und der ganze Kerl vor Gottes Angesicht steht wie ein versiegter Brunnen, wie ein verlechter Eimer'.¹⁷ And like the poet in the ode, Werther recognizes that he alone is the cause of this disappearance of life from nature, 'ich fühle zu wahr, dass an mir alle Schuld liegt — nicht Schuld! Genug, dass in mir die Quelle alles Elendes verborgen ist, wie ehemals die Quelle aller Seligkeiten'.¹⁸

The reference to *Werther* implies that the poet's situation in the ode resembles Werther's. But there is more.¹⁹ At the beginning of the novel, Werther did not see, did not even pretend to himself to see, the external world as it really is, but "created" a world around him chiefly inspired by his fascination with Homer which was probably caused by his identification with Ulysses. Like Ulysses, Werther believed himself to be on a journey which would ultimately bring him back home, to Lotte. But when he loses faith in this happy return, the beautiful Homeric spring landscape takes on a new appearance, and changes into the gloomy world of Ossian. In *Werther* the appearance of the landscape reflects the inner development of the protagonist: when hopeful, his world was Homeric; when he loses hope, the world becomes, as in the letter cited, joy-less and lifeless; when he is desperate, the dreary world of Ossian emerges. By choosing Homer and Ossian as the primary sources of Werther's visions of nature, Goethe subtly suggests that, like Homer and Ossian, Werther is in fact blind to reality,²⁰ that the world he "sees" is the product of his own highly strung sensibility.

In 'Dejection: an Ode' a similar tendency can be recognized. Formerly, the poet's vision of the world had been inspired by joy and hope, it was a time when 'fruits, and foliage, *not my own, seemed mine*' (italics mine), the italicized words indicating that Coleridge does not claim that his former, happy world was any more real than his present one. Now, in his dejection, he sees, like Werther, a meaningless world devoid of all life and in stanza VII the aspect of the world becomes threatening, a world filled with potentially destructive forces, not unlike Werther's world of Ossian. Stanza VI, then, suggests that there is a remarkable similarity between the poet's situation and Werther's. This is one more indication that he has given up all hope of establishing a meaningful contact with an objective world outside and

acknowledges that the only world he will be able to perceive is one coloured, if not determined, by his own subjective state of being.

Blindness to nature, alienation from the divine life of nature, personal guilt or, at least, deficiency: with respect to these the allusions to *Werther* and *Samson Agonistes*, of course, reinforce each other. Rather uncannily, they also suggest that death or suicide may present the only viable solution to the poet's agonies. Once one becomes attentive to it, other allusions to death or suicide may be noticed in the poem: the reference to Sir Patrick Spence who drowned with his crew in the storm; then there is Otway whose name suggested to Coleridge's contemporaries, as Dekker states, 'a host of other ill-fated literary geniuses ranging from Spenser and Collins to Chatterton and Burns';²¹ finally, there is a reference to Lucy Gray at the end of stanza VII who died on the heath not far away from home.

This accumulation of allusions to suicide in the ode reminds me of the final meeting of Werther and Lotte when Werther indirectly informs Lotte of his intention to commit suicide by reading from his translation of Ossian's 'Songs of Selma'. It may be noted that Wordsworth, at least, took his friend's hints seriously: in 'Resolution and Independence', his "poetic reply" to the ode, he seems primarily intent on convincing Coleridge of the virtue of perseverance, of the challenge presented by life, no matter how bleak its prospects. This will be discussed in greater detail at the beginning of chapter XI. Although there may be an element of posing in all these suggestions of an approaching death or suicide, they illustrate how deeply Coleridge was affected and disturbed by his dejection and alienation.

The beginning of stanza VII marks a turning point in the ode. Having been forced to acknowledge the practical inefficacy of his theoretical views and to accept the inevitability of a subjective attitude to nature, Coleridge concludes that the only alternative to his deadening dejection is to give free reign to his feelings of despair, suppressed so far, and to impose them unservedly on the world around him thus filling nature with a new, wholly subjective life.

The decision to shake off his lethargy is expressed in two rather puzzling lines,

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!

As Parker notes, the 'viper thoughts' cannot but refer to the state of dejection itself,²² while the snake image in clearly Miltonic overtones²³ connects this

dejection with the notion of a fall from the divine life of nature and man. To connect alienation from nature with the notion of the fall is essentially Neoplatonic, as is suggested by Plotinus' description of those 'self-centred' individual souls who 'in a weary desire of standing apart ... find their way, each to a place of its very own. This state long maintained, the Soul is a deserter from the All; ... it is a partial thing, isolated, weakened, full of care, intent upon the fragment, severed from the whole ... It has fallen'.²⁴

Nevertheless, these lines seem somewhat incompatible with the context in which they appear since they suggest an incipient movement towards redemption, whereas the change in the poem is merely from passive to active alienation, from 'Reality's dark dream' to a "dark man's life", from death to life-in-death.²⁵ However this may be, stanza VII shows in four movements what this revival of his feelings leads up to.

First he turns his attention to the wind-harp,

What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lute sent forth!

To the poet the wind-harp here clearly does not indicate the divine life of nature anymore, but his own fallen state. The harp is, as it were, screaming about the presence of life in nature, while the poet only registers 'agony by torture lengthened out', his own feelings of despair.²⁶

Then he describes the wind which

Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.

The wind is also changed from a life-force into a messenger of death, associated with evil.²⁷ Nature has come alive in this passage, but it has also become malicious, threatening, and deadly. How is man to live in the midst of these annihilating powers of nature? It is as if the wind supplies the answer,

What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds —
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!

Defeat, pain, cold: life has indeed become desperate. As Karl remarks in Schiller's *Die Räuber*, 'Aussendinge sind nur der Anstrich des Manns — Ich bin mein Himmel und meine Hölle'.²⁸ In these lines Coleridge is experiencing his own hell.

A sudden calm follows,

But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
 And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
 With growns, and tremulous shudderings — all is over —

For one moment the poet seems to believe that with the storm his own agonies have subsided. He has carried his identification with nature so far that he thinks that once the wind stops raving, he will be calm as well. Soon, however, this hope appears unfounded and he hears the wind tell another tale of loss and misery, based on 'Lucy Gray'. At its beginning he confidently calls it 'A tale of less affright,/ And tempered with delight', but towards its end he is back where he started,

And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

Thus the parts of the ode dealing with the poet are concluded on a note of despair. The 'bitter grief and fear', the agonized screaming, the unmistakable allusions to death, all demonstrate that the poet's dilemma has not been resolved and that he himself entertains little hope of a future solution. As M.F. Schulz asserts, 'It remains a blustering April shower noisily parroting his own forlorn feelings, the random wailings of the wind symbolizing the disorganised, unwholesome products of his imagination'.²⁹ Although in stanza VIII Coleridge employs some fine imagery to describe the 'one Life' relation with nature he fervently hopes the lady may experience, it is quite clear that only by turning the attention away from himself, is he capable of concluding the ode with the semblance of a happy ending.

'Dejection: an Ode', then, reveals a basic tension between Coleridge's theories and his practical experience; a tension which is so formidable that a reconciliation between the two is inconceivable. This incompatibility of what he wanted to believe and what he could not help but experience may be one of the causes — besides the many difficulties he was confronted with in his personal life — of his ill-concealed death-wish. Some critics have attempted to harmonize the ode with Coleridge's theoretical views arguing, for instance, that at the end of stanza VII, as R.H. Fogle puts it, 'Strife, in effect, has given way to reconciliation ... The mind recalled to activity, has regained its wholeness';³⁰ or, as M.H. Abrams asserts, 'the poem rounds on itself and ends where it began, with a calm both of nature and of mind. But the poet has moved from the calm of apathy to one of peace after passion'.³¹

As I have tried to show, however, such a hopeful interpretation is difficult to impose on the ode which affirms unequivocally the insufficiency of the 'one Life' notion when one is confronted with dejection or despair and

embraces a subjective, in part VII almost a "projectionist" attitude to nature, wholly at odds with Coleridge's theories. As Dekker states, in the ode 'Coleridge finds himself obliged to reject the long-cherished belief that the Divine Spirit is immanent in, and accessible through, Nature'.³²

CHAPTER X
'KUBLA KHAN' AND ITS IDEATIONAL RESEMBLANCE TO
'DEJECTION: AN ODE'

'Kubla Khan' is one of the most elusive and at the same time intriguing poems in the English language. Without a discussion of it, a study of Coleridge's poetry and thought would be incomplete. Yet its chronology is so uncertain, its imagery so indeterminate and vague, its ultimate meaning so much subject to critical disagreement, that no definite conclusions can be drawn from it concerning Coleridge's development.

In view of this, I have chosen to outline broadly an interpretation of the poem, neglecting matters of detail, with the object of showing the feasibility of reading it as a companion piece to 'Dejection: an Ode'. It will be argued that the first part of the poem (ll. 1-36) is a comprehensive and highly suggestive description of the 'one Life' idea, while in the second part the poet laments his inability to experience and express the divine life-force as it manifests itself in every day life.

Before discussing the poem, it is necessary to pay some attention to matters of chronology since Coleridge in his preface claims, and many critics accept, that the poem was written prior to his journey to Germany, in 1797 or 1798, which would, of course, preclude the possibility of a more than accidental connection with the dejection ode. In her detailed discussion of the available evidence, E. Schneider has drawn the conclusion that, while the date Coleridge himself supplies in the preface is probably to be discounted, the poem 'had been in existence at least since October, 1800'.¹ Even this "post-German" date would be too early for my purpose.

It would be self defeating to quibble with Schneider's extensively documented conclusion, but a few reservations may be indicated. With regard to the external evidence, it should be noted that very little is known concerning the writing history of 'Kubla Khan'. There is the final version, first published in 1816, there is one slightly different manuscript version of an unknown date, but beyond that all is conjecture.

This means that the original version of the poem which may have been

written at any time between 1797 and 1801, is probably unknown and that it is not at all impossible that this original passed through a process of revision, alteration, and addition on a scale similar to that of, for instance, 'The Eolian Harp' before it assumed its final shape. In support of an extended period of revision, one could point to two notebook entries, dating from 1802 and 1804 respectively, copying rather rudimentary facts about Kubla Khan from Purchas.² These entries are rather puzzling if one accepts that the poem as it was subsequently published had already been written at that time: why would Coleridge copy these facts if he had already finished a poem based, as his preface affirms, on this very source?

This is admittedly a minor point, especially since it is questionable whether *Purchas his Pilgrimage* was of much importance in the conception of the poem. As the evidence of the *Biographia Literaria* reveals it was not unusual for Coleridge to extensively document minor debts while suppressing major ones.³ In the case of 'Kubla Khan', the influence of Milton seems of much greater relevance than Purchas.⁴ In fact, all the ingredients of the poem's landscape with the possible exception of the pleasure dome, can be found in *Paradise Lost*, including Kubla himself.⁵ Since Milton's influence is unmistakable throughout Coleridge's poetic career — and not only at the time he wrote the dejection ode when he was, as has appeared, much preoccupied with Milton — this is of little assistance in determining when the poem was written.

While the external evidence does not exclude the possibility, it is primarily the internal evidence which suggests that the definitive version of the poem was written contemporaneously with, or after, 'Dejection: an Ode'. Most critics agree that the river represents, as J.V. Baker puts it, 'a symbol for unbounded energy of creative power'⁶ connected with man, whether it be called imagination or, simply, life.⁷ This conception of a life-inspiring fountain within man — comparable to the "feeling" of the notebooks and the 'Joy' of the dejection ode — implies that the poem in its published version could not have existed before 1801 at the very earliest, simply because before that time Coleridge did not entertain such ideas.

Inconclusive as these observations necessarily are, they may at least bear out the possibility of the poem having been substantially written after Coleridge had come to accept the 'one Life' notion so that an interpretation of 'Kubla Khan' which emphasizes its ideational resemblance with the dejection ode cannot immediately be rejected on chronological grounds.

The first part of the poem (ll. 1-36) describes a landscape which is fairly

clear in its broad outlines. There is a river whose source is an indomitable fountain in a deep, savage chasm. This river branching out into many 'sinuous rills' fertilizes a plot of land of almost paradisaical beauty, and after running above ground for some ten miles disappears again into underground caves, ultimately streaming into a lifeless ocean. This beautiful plot of land Kubla Khan turns into a pleasure garden by erecting walls around it and building a pleasure dome in the middle of it, where the sound of the river's beginning, the fountain, and its end, the caves, can both be heard. This landscape is described in richly allusive language; the river, for instance, is 'Alph, the sacred river', associating it not only with one of the rivers originating in paradise, Alpheus, but also with Alpha and Omega; in short, the name suggests a ubiquitous, divine, life-giving force.

This poetic landscape lends itself most readily to an interpretation as "inscape", as symbolizing aspects of man's inner being. In such an interpretation the river would, of course, be an image of the divine force, or "feeling", as it manifests itself in man. If this interpretation is worked out in some detail, the 'mighty fountain' signifies the superhuman and as such uncontrollable origin of the life-giving force: it is savage, holy and enchanted, it fertilizes, imparts life to man but, since it far exceeds human power or control, it is also threatening and potentially destructive.

The 'deep romantic chasm' where the divine life enters the human landscape is the place where man is in closest and most direct contact with the divine. The mysterious 'woman wailing for her demon-lover' can possibly be explained in Neoplatonic terms as the human soul longing to be one with its divine source. In this respect Plotinus' description of the human soul as the lover, and the divine One as the beloved may be illuminating, 'So long as it [i.e. the human soul] is There, it holds the heavenly love; here its love is the baser; There the soul is Aphrodite of the heavens; here, turned harlot, Aphrodite of the public ways: yet the soul is always an Aphrodite'.⁸ The water of the fountain is supplied by an underground river, it stems from a region beyond human consciousness, which would nowadays be called the unconscious, but which Coleridge probably regarded as the supernatural.

Kubla as 'the greatest Prince in Peoples, Cities, & Kingdoms that ever was in the World'⁹ could be taken as an image of the ability of man to impose rational order on a certain part of his inner being, with the dome as 'the center of the fruitfully limited field of consciousness', as P. Magnuson puts it.¹⁰ This enclosed garden of the rational mind is continuously threatened not only by the superhuman forces which are the sustaining cause of its life,

but also by the inevitability of the river's disappearance into the 'sunless' and 'lifeless' ocean of death. Thus the 'Ancestral voices prophesying war' may at once serve as a reminder of the temporary and precarious existence of the human pleasure garden, and as a warning against human hubris and complacency in the face of divine omnipotence.

In spite of the frailty and insecurity of the human situation, however, Kubla seems to have established an almost ideal state of balance in the final section of the first part,

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.
 It was a miracle of rare device,
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

From the first two lines it appears that the relation between the pleasure dome, the part of the mind under rational control, and the sacred river, the divine cause of life as it reveals itself in man, remains uncertain and indirect; it remains one of substance and shadow, a complete union with the divine force being apparently beyond human scope. Nevertheless, Kubla's dome is in harmony with both the source and end of life, in harmony, that is, with the natural and supernatural forces which enable man to live.

'Kubla Khan' can be interpreted as an "outscape", as well as an "inscape". In such a reading, the river would signify the divine life-force operative in nature. Kubla's garden would symbolize man's attitude to nature: in his encounter with it, man imposes order on it, thus taming a divine nature in all its pristine, savage, supra-human beauty and power into a garden which can be comprehended, and enjoyed, within the limits of human consciousness. Again, this nature tamed and ordered by man is under continuous threat of disruption since man is dealing with a (super)natural force far beyond his power to control. Still, Kubla succeeds in achieving a great degree of harmony with it. As J.B. Beer suggests, 'Kubla Khan, the man of commanding genius, has temporarily imposed his will upon nature, but untamed forces still exist which can in a moment destroy the fragile pattern of order, security and pleasure which he has set up'.¹¹

Thus two mutually reinforcing layers of meaning can be recognized in the poem, but even this is not all. Although exaggerated, N. Fruman's statement about the description of the fountain which 'momently', 'in fast thick pants' forces its way out of the earth is not wholly unjustified; where, he

wonders, 'In all the world's literature, is there a more precise description of sexual ejaculation?'¹² It is impossible to interpret the whole poetic landscape in sexual terms, unless one wants to regard the 'fertile land' subsequently enclosed as a female body and the reconciliation achieved towards the end as a covert description of post-coital gratification, and unless one can conceive of Coleridge using the word 'sacred' in this connection. But if taken as an allusion to the human life-creating force, which is created in the image of its Maker, the sexual element nicely fits in with the overall meaning of the poem.

It is clear that since the first part of 'Kubla Khan' can be interpreted both as "inscape" and as "outscape", it acquires the status of a remarkably felicitous rendering of the 'one Life within us and abroad'. In the description of the river as the divine force imparting life to internal as well as external reality, it is implied that ultimately man and nature are one, since their life is derived from the same divine source, while the sexual connotations suggest man's active, creative participation in this force of life.

The pleasure-dome symbolizes the highest degree of harmony with God and nature which man is capable of reaching. It is noteworthy that this concurrence of the divine "feeling" in man and that in nature — the prerequisite of an ideal relation between man and nature — is thus, as in the dejection ode, inextricably bound up with 'Joy' (cf. 'pleasure-dome', 'deep delight'). Read in this way, the first part of 'Kubla Khan' presents a symbolic landscape which reveals in a comprehensive manner the root conceptions of Coleridge's thought concerning God, the human mind, and external nature during the first years of the nineteenth century.

The second part of the poem is comparatively straightforward and shows a manifest resemblance to 'Dejection: an Ode', although its tone is less morbid. Over against the 'miracle of rare device', the 'new Earth and new Heaven', achieved by Kubla, the inability of the poet to experience this ideal world and to recreate it in poetry is implicitly asserted,

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

In the dejection ode the 'strong music in the soul' was indispensable to accomplishing an ideal union with God and nature. Here the symphony and song of Abyssinian maid, the paradisaical muse, perform a similar function.

The music of the ode was vouchsafed only to the pure in his purest hour. Here a kindred, virtually unbridgeable gap is suggested between the music of life and inspiration, and the poet: he has seen the maiden only once in a vision, and the subtitle of the poem 'A Vision in a Dream' further emphasizes its extremely rare occurrence. As E. Schneider states, 'Coleridge feels the same lack as he described in the ode, a lack of inner joy or delight'.¹³

At first sight it may seem somewhat strange that the poet who in the first part of the poem has succeeded in creating a beautiful description of the landscape with the pleasure-dome, here laments his inability to do just that. But it is clear that the landscape only expresses his beliefs and ideas in a symbolic and indirect way and that it does not describe the life-force as it actually manifests itself in man and nature. Kubla's landscape is highly suggestive but at the same time elusive in that the symbolic world of the poem is not in any direct way related to the "real" world of man and nature.

In this short and sketchy discussion of the poem I have left many elements out of consideration, my main purpose being to propose an interpretation which would corroborate the claim that 'Kubla Khan' and 'Dejection: an Ode' express similar attitudes and ideas and that therefore the proper place of 'Kubla Khan' in the Coleridge canon might be much closer to the ode than has been thought hitherto. If the interpretation presented here is accepted in its general outlines, it is certain that the poem in its final form could not have been written prior to Coleridge's visit to Germany, a more likely date being somewhere between 1803 and 1807. It should be admitted, however, that internal evidence can never be conclusive in the case of a poem in which so much is suggested and hinted at, and so little is definite and straightforward. Yet, although no reader or critic can ever be certain where interpretation ends and reading into the poem begins, although it is likely that new significations and shades of meaning will continue to be found by readers who enjoy wandering through its exotic landscape, the possibility of a close connection with the dejection ode seems to deserve further consideration and inquiry.

CHAPTER XI

REALITY AND DREAM: ROMANTIC IRONY IN 'THE PICTURE'

As was briefly noted in Chapter IX, Wordsworth presented his poetic reply to Coleridge's dejection ode in 'Resolution and Independence'. Wordsworth's reaction is not what one would normally have expected from him, since, as M. Teichman puts it, he does not affirm 'the solace of natural beauty, the renovating and saving power of memory, the reassuring sense of a Shaping Spirit rolling through all things'.¹ Wordsworth apparently realized that such comfort would not do full justice to the problem Coleridge had laid down in the ode, in which he expressed his deep sense of alienation from nature even while recognizing the life-giving forces inherent in nature. Wordsworth must have been aware that Coleridge's problem in the ode was not so much with nature as with his own inability to share in nature's 'Joy'. As has been argued, Coleridge experienced this alienation so keenly and persistently, that he even hints at the possibility of suicide and it seems that in 'Resolution and Independence' Wordsworth is chiefly concerned with convincing his friend of the inadvisability of such a course.

Wordsworth begins by identifying himself with his friend's state of dejection in order to suggest his profound, deeply felt understanding of the problem: he, too, is sometimes so dejected that he feels entirely cut off from the joys of nature; he, too, sometimes experiences 'fears and fancies thick' about his future; he, too, has considered the feasibility of a suicidal release; he, too, believes that,²

By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness. (ll. 47-49)

After thus indicating his understanding and sympathy, Wordsworth tries to offer a solution in the story of the leech-gatherer. In the context, his simple encounter with the decrepit, old man is rich with meaning. A few brief remarks will have to suffice here.

The leech-gatherer is clearly comparable to the poet: both are dependent on nature for their livelihood and life and any disturbance of their relation

with nature would have grave consequences. The essence of Wordsworth's answer to Coleridge transpires from the only words of the leech-gatherer directly recorded in the poem. Referring to leeches, he says,

'Once I could meet them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may'. (ll. 124-126)

Like Wordsworth, and by implication Coleridge, the leech-gatherer acknowledges a significant decrease in the blessings nature affords him: so much effort, so little gain. Yet, since there is neither for the leech-gatherer, nor for the poets a viable alternative, he is bound to persevere in his attempts and, as he dispassionately notes, "finds them where he may".

At first this statement conjures up in Wordsworth's mind a rather gloomy picture of the old man's fate,

In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently. (ll. 129-131)

Very little comfort seems to be offered here. The leech-gatherer wanders alone, without human company, and silently, that is without having the opportunity or ability to express his experience in words. But, as Wordsworth implies in the last stanza, this is not so much a false as a partial, incomplete picture of the old man's situation, because it fails to take account of an essential dimension of his personality.

The leech-gatherer is not only passively and helplessly dependent on nature, but his life-long communion with its forces has also turned him into a true man of nature; nature in its most comprehensive sense, inclusive of its connotations of divinity and joy: his voice 'was like a stream/ Scarce heard', he seemed 'like a man from some far region sent,/ To give me human strength, by apt admonishment' (cf. also stanzas IX and X). Thus, the old man acquires the character of a prophet of the God of nature, which is, of course, something which Wordsworth and Coleridge also endeavoured to achieve, their inability to do so being a major cause of their despondency. Owing to this, the leech-gatherer's admonition to persevere loses most of the gloomy features which Wordsworth initially connected with it. While recognizing that the service of nature's God is by no means easy, the old man affirms that it is only "natural" that life becomes more difficult as one gets older.

Once this necessity of nature is accepted, there is nothing gloomy about the service of nature anymore: the old man is 'cheerful', 'kind', 'stately',

'firm', simply because he has learned to acquiesce in the natural course of events and not to put his aims and hopes higher than his natural state. In the story of the leech-gatherer, then, Wordsworth does not deny the increasing difficulty of serving nature as one gets older, but he contends that all depends on one's attitude to it. Like the old man, one should accept one's fate cheerfully, and in that case nature still furnishes one with the occasional leeches, the occasional moments of joyful insight. Essentially, Wordsworth's advice to Coleridge is happy acceptance instead of dejected resignation.

If this is indeed the tenor of Wordsworth's reaction to the dejection ode, it should be noted that for all its subtlety and understanding, it does not present an answer that would finally have satisfied Coleridge. Mainly, because Wordsworth imputes the cause of the poet's diminishing contact with nature to the process of growing older and to the psychological difficulties attendant on this. But although these may play a minor role in Coleridge's dejection, the causes he himself suggests in the ode are much more fundamental.

On a biographical level, there were Coleridge's domestic problems and his ill-fated love of Sara Hutchinson which the verse letter enlarges on. On a philosophical or existential level, he found the essence of his faith in nature shaken by the recognition that the 'one Life' notion, however attractive in theory, did not really work in practice. Since 'The Picture' is expressly concerned with these two fundamental causes of Coleridge's dejection, it is tempting to regard it as his poetic reaction to Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence'.³

'The Picture' has received very little critical attention⁴ and if it is referred to at all, it is usually dismissed because of its 'amorphous development, heterogeneous tone, and mixed diction',⁵ or because it is 'languorous and slightly unfocused'.⁶ Yet it deserves detailed attention as an attempt to give poetic form to the poet's despair induced by his inability to enter into a meaningful relation with the life around him. P.M. Adair notes that its 'structure wanders uncertainly from fantasy to a not very convincing reality and back',⁷ but this should not be taken as an indication of the poem's weakness, but as a recognition of the degree to which the poet's inner uncertainty is reflected in its structure. In this respect, 'The Picture' achieves a large measure of unity between content and form.

This is primarily effected by the masterful use Coleridge makes of "romantic irony" which A.K. Mellor, on the basis of Friedrich Schlegel's

theories, defines as follows,⁸

the authentic romantic ironist is as filled with enthusiasm as with skepticism. ... Having ironically acknowledged the fictiveness of his own patternings of human experience, he romantically engages in the creative process of life by eagerly constructing new forms, new myths. And these new fictions and self-concepts bear with them the seeds of their own destruction. They too die to give way to new patterns, in a never-ending process that becomes an analogue for life itself. The resultant artistic mode that alone can properly be called romantic irony must therefore be a form or structure that simultaneously creates and de-creates itself.

As the following discussion hopes to demonstrate in detail, 'The Picture' can be read as a school book example of this device.

In the conception of the poem, Coleridge made use of Gessner's prose idyll 'Der Veste Vorsatz' which describes how a distraught lover seeks consolation in a melancholy wood in hopes of finding forgetfulness, 'Leb izt wohl Amor, dein Pfeil wird mich hier nicht finden, ich will nicht mehr lieben, und in einsamer Gegend weise seyn'.⁹ The lover's resolution to conquer and subdue his feelings of love vanishes at once, however, when he sees the maiden's footprint. This sudden change of heart Gessner appropriately describes with an incoherence mirroring and expressing the lover's state of mind,¹⁰

Aber -- Himmel! was entdeket mein Aug am Ufer im Sand! ich zittre, ach
-- der Fusstritt eines Mädchens; -- wie klein, wie nett ist der Fuss! --
ernste Betrachtung! Melancholie! ach wo seyd ihr? -- wie schön war ihr
Gang! ich folg ihr -- Ach Mädchen, ich eile ich folge deiner Spur!

In 'The Picture' Coleridge adopted the basic situation and a number of images and descriptions from Gessner's idyll,¹¹ changing a rather stereotyped account of love's madness into a poem of much greater profundity and relevance.

As in Gessner's idyll, the protagonist in Coleridge's poem is a lover attempting to "emancipate himself from passion's dreams" in a wild and gloomy nature, but whose efforts are of no avail since he continually relapses into the dream world of love, no matter how hard he struggles not to, and who is in the end forced to recognize that for him there is no alternative but to accept this dream world as the only "real" world he is still capable of knowing. As Coleridge described the poem in his notebook, 'A Poem on the endeavor to emancipate the soul from day-dreams & note the different attempts & the vain ones'.¹²

Before embarking on a detailed discussion of the poem, it may be noted that 'The Picture' is by no means the only poem of this period which is concerned with the conflict between an inner world of feeling, man's dream world, and the "real" world outside which in spite of all efforts persistently takes on the subjective colours of this inner world of feeling, and thus loses its importance as a comforter and guide independently of man. One early example may suffice.

In 'The Mad Monk' (1800) this conflict was cursorily described. The monk having killed his beloved Rosa out of jealousy, watches a sunset, and wonders,

'Is it the stormy clouds above
That flash'd so red a gleam?
On yonder downward trickling stream? —
'Tis not the blood of her I love. —
The sun torments me from his western bed,
Oh, let him cease for ever to diffuse
Those crimson spectre hues!
Oh, let me lie in peace, and be for ever dead!'

Although the monk *knows* nature to be different ("Tis not the blood of her I love"), he cannot help projecting his guilt on nature, to such an extent even that the sun, the natural cause of life, seems to him only a tormentor. The monk has known the 'steady loveliness', the divine qualities of nature, but this "real" nature is now irrevocably lost to him and he is completely engulfed — inside and outside — in his feelings of guilt. As in the dejection ode, this predicament induces the monk to court death as the only way-out.¹³ In 'The Picture' Coleridge combines this "loss of reality" theme with the theme of the crazed lover, a combination of which the autobiographical aspects are obvious.

In 'The Picture', the protagonist oscillates between two poles, or states of mind. On the one hand, he desperately endeavours to establish and maintain contact with reality, while on the other hand, he is constantly relapsing into his personal dream world of love, a subjectively motivated extension of his inner being. The first sixteen lines set the tone for the conflict that is to be enacted in the poem,¹⁴

Through weeds and thorns, and matted underwood
I force my way; now climb, and now descend
O'er rocks, or bare or mossy, with wild foot
Crushing the purple whorts; while oft unseen,
Hurrying along the drifted forest-leaves,

The scared snake rustles. Onward still I toil,
 I know not, ask not whither! A new joy,
 Lovely as light, sudden as summer gust,
 And gladsome as the first-born of the spring,
 Beckons me on, or follows from behind,
 Playmate, or guide! The master-passion quelled,
 I feel that I am free. With dun-red bark
 The fir-trees, and the unfrequent slender oak,
 Forth from this tangle wild of bush and brake
 Soar up, and form a melancholy vault
 High o'er me, murmuring like a distant sea.

Most important in this passage is the apparently confident assertion of the protagonist that he has conquered the 'master-passion', the strong feelings of love which had determined his life up to then, and that because he is now free from love's tyranny, he is filled with 'a new joy'. Joy is, of course, a loaded term in a poem so closely related in time and overall theme to the dejection ode. It hints at the possibility of establishing a meaningful relation with nature through the mutual interchange of his new joy and nature's.

It is curious, however, that this new joy has been inspired by a nature which is anything but joyful. It is an uninviting wilderness of weeds and thorns, potentially threatening (cf. 'snake') and clearly associated with death (cf. 'melancholy vault'). From the outset it is certain that in spite of the lover's confidence, no joyful communion with this nature can be achieved, only one of mutual gloom and despondency.

The situation Coleridge develops in this passage is unique in his poetry of this period; usually man is dejected, and nature joyful, but here it is the other way round. The only way to account for this strange reversal is to suppose that Coleridge is here adopting the situation the leech-gatherer found himself in when, surrounded by 'lonely' and 'weary' moors, he remained yet cheerful. This would mean that in this poem Coleridge is concerned with exploring the situation which Wordsworth had held up to him in an attempt to restore his friend's hope and confidence.

A connection with 'Resolution and Independence' is corroborated by the fact that the new joy the protagonist claims to feel comes 'sudden as summer gust', and that he is unable to understand its true character — is it playmate, or guide? Wordsworth had described how he sometimes, for no apparent reason, suddenly falls from the heights of joy to the lowest depths of dejection,

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
 Of joy in minds that can no further go,
 As high as we have mounted in delight
 In our dejection do we sink as low;
 To me that morning did it happen so;
 And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
 Dim sadness — and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name. (stanza IV)

Coleridge ironically reverses this process. His joy is just as sudden, unmotivated and elusive as Wordsworth's dejection. By implication he thus criticizes what he must have considered the main weakness of Wordsworth's poem, namely that it fails to take into account the very fundamental causes of dejection Coleridge had indicated in the ode. Wordsworth's dejection is initially no more than a chance occurrence and seems later to be occasioned by the psychological and physical problems of growing older (cf. stanza XVII).

One more touch of irony can be recognized in Coleridge's adaptation of the situation of the leech-gatherer. While Wordsworth's fit of dejection came upon him when he was surrounded by a nature overflowing with joy (cf. stanzas I-III), Coleridge is here surprised by an unaccountable, almost irrational joy in the midst of a world of gloom and death where this joy is completely out of place. In the subsequent section of the poem which he later added to it,¹⁵ Coleridge emphasizes the irrational quality of this joy,

Here Wisdom might resort, and here Remorse;
 Here too the love-lorn man, who, sick in soul,
 And of this busy human heart aweary,
 Worships the spirit of unconscious life
 In tree or wild-flower. — Gentle lunatic!
 If so he might not wholly cease to be,
 He would far rather not be that he is;
 But would be something that he knows not of,
 In winds or waters, or among the rocks!

The nature by which the protagonist is surrounded is not a place for joy, but one for wisdom, remorse, and despair. It is a world in which melancholy, despondency, and suicidal inclinations — wishes to become one with the unconscious life of nature — would be expected. Yet since he is making a heroic effort to "quell the master-passion", not to let himself be run away with and determined by his feelings of love and despair, he insists against all odds, all reason, and all nature, that he feels a 'new joy', presumably because this is the solution of the dilemma Wordsworth had suggested.

In the first sixteen lines, the protagonist perceives the world without interference of his love-ridden mind, then in the passage last quoted he embarks on a contemplation of the scene and after briefly touching on "wisdom" and "remorse" — which he does not enlarge upon because his interest clearly lies elsewhere — the love-lorn man by an almost "natural" development of thought enters the scenery of his mind, his dream world of love. As soon as this has happened, his fantasies are activated by identification and the "gentle lunatic" begins to determine his world, although in this first instance for only a short while.

These first two passages illustrate the basic pattern of the poem: a passage in which the protagonist is asserting his new freedom from love and his new joy, is followed by a section in which his mind wanders into his dream world of love, again followed by another affirmation of his freedom from love's delusions, and so on. In the course of the poem the passages in which he claims to be free and to perceive nature as it really is become less confident and more desperate, while his world of dreams intrudes more frequently and persistently until it finally takes over completely and the lover loses himself in his own fantasies.

In relativistic terms, this means that in 'The Picture' there is an accumulation of ironic reversals exemplifying how in the protagonist's mind his two fictive worlds — that of the "reality" and "freedom" myth, and that of the "love" myth — struggle for the ascendancy. But it is clear that Coleridge is not indulging in relativistic games here. He is describing an effort as desperate as it is crucial to regain control over his feelings and to reestablish contact with a divine nature, a struggle in which all his beliefs about man, nature, and God are implicitly at stake.

By a quick transition — 'But hence, fond wretch! Breathe not contagion here!' — the thoughts about the "gentle lunatic" are dismissed and the next twenty lines are devoted to an assertion that love cannot impose itself on nature here. The length and the increasingly hortatory tone of the passage reveal the underlying uncertainty of the lover; by the very extravagance of his exclamations he implies the reverse of what he ostensibly says.

This passage leads up to a climax in the lines,

This is my hour of triumph! I can now
With my own fancies play the merry fool,
And laugh away worse folly, being free.

Not without hubris, the protagonist believes he can dabble in any fancies he wants to since love is so insistently absent. Yet even if he were really free

from love, he would have little hope of establishing a meaningful contact with nature; he asserts that he would merely exchange "merry folly" for "worse folly". Another comment on the fate of man as Wordsworth portrayed it in the story of the leech-gatherer may be implied here. Wandering through a lonely nature on the off chance of receiving an occasional blessing and nevertheless to be cheerful, Coleridge would consider "merry folly", the alternative of relinquishing all one's hopes in nature being "worse folly".

Underlying the situation of the protagonist, Coleridge has built up a curious dilemma; love and joyful nature are opposed to absence of love and a dead nature. The insoluble character of the dilemma is clear. In a joyful nature, love is all powerful and turns nature into a subjective extension of one's own passion. In a dead nature this contagious feeling of love may be absent, but nature cannot afford any comfort other than that which is supplied by one's own fancies. Thus, by establishing this coupling of notions, Coleridge has precluded all possibility of the protagonist's new joy and that of nature ever to be wedded, since when he feels this joy, he does so by virtue of its very absence from nature.

In the next section (ll. 68-111) a new dimension only implicit up to then is introduced: the freedom from love proves illusory. Sitting near a 'desert stream', beside an 'old, / Hollow, and weedy oak', the lover gives free reign to his fancies resulting in a day dream, experienced as real, of himself looking at the reflection of his beloved in the pool.

The suddenness of the transition from "reality" to "phantom world" clearly suggests the precarious nature of his resolution not to feel love — one is tempted to state that it suggests the "unreality" of the "reality" on which he had insisted and built all his hopes,

And thou too, desert stream! no pool of thine,
Though clear as lake in latest summer-eve,
Did e'er reflect the stately virgin's robe,
The face, the form divine, the downcast look
Contemplative! Behold! her open palm
Presses her cheek and brow! her elbow rests
On the bare branch of half-uprooted tree,
That leans towards its mirror! Who erewhile
Had from her countenance turned, or looked by stealth,
(For Fear is true-love's cruel nurse), he now
With steadfast gaze and unoffending eye,
Worships the watery idol, dreaming hopes
Delicious to the soul, but fleeting, vain,
E'en as that phantom-world on which he gazed ...

The day dream gives an insight into the protagonist's real state of mind. No matter how dead the nature surrounding him, he cannot quell his passion, illustrating the inevitable truth of the dictum, 'I may not hope from outward forms to win/ The passion and the life, whose fountains are within'. In fact, Coleridge seems to go one step further here. He indicates that the outward appearance of nature does not matter at all, since anything can be imposed on it, anything can be "seen". The lover's eyes do not only 'make pictures, when they are shut' ('A Day-Dream', l. 1), but also when they are open.

It becomes difficult to present the accumulation of ironies Coleridge is playing with in meaningful language. In his phantom world, the lover looks at the reflection, the phantom image, of his beloved in the pool. Towards its end, the day dream becomes even more involved. After the reflection of the phantom girl has been scattered, not to appear again, the lover has no choice but to yearn after the lost phantom of the phantom girl for the rest of his life,

He turns, and she is gone!
Homeward she steals through many a woodland maze
Which he shall seek in vain. Ill-fated youth!
Go, day by day, and waste thy manly prime
In mad love-yearning by the vacant brook,
Till sickly thoughts bewitch thine eyes, and thou
Behold'st her shadow still abiding there,
The Naiad of the mirror!

The lover in the day dream is so bewitched by the memory of the phantom girl that he will recreate her, impose her image on the world around him. As such, the girl the lover ultimately worships will be something like the phantom of the phantom of a phantom girl, a rather curious phenomenon.

It is clear that Coleridge is indulging in a kind of humour at his own expense, but the undertone is serious. How can the lover avoid being engulfed in the quicksand of unrealities he himself creates, how can someone at such a great remove from reality ever hope to achieve a new contact with it? The fate of the lover in the day dream, in fact, foreshadows that of the protagonist.

But first, he endeavours to subdue his feelings of love once more,

No to thee,
O wild and desert stream! belongs this tale:
Gloomy and dark art thou ...

This be my chosen haunt — emancipate
From Passion's dreams, a freeman, and alone,

I rise and trace its devious course. O lead,
Lead me to deeper shades and lonelier glooms.

By wishing for a yet gloomier nature the lover acknowledges the bankruptcy of his hopes. Even in a dead nature, love continues to obtrude.

In the conflict between his rational efforts to reconquer his grasp of reality and the force of his projective passion, the latter is bound to be victorious, as also appears from the very next lines,

Lo! stealing through the canopy of firs,
How fair the sunshine spots that mossy rock,
Isle of the river, whose parted waves
Dart off asunder with an angry sound,
How soon to reunite! And see! they meet,
Each in the other lost and found: and see
Placeless, as spirits, one soft water-sun
Throbbing within them, heart at once and eye!

The stream reuniting after having been separated by an island, he cannot but "see" as the image of a 'deep embrace', signalling that nature itself has now become an extension of his inner self.

Coleridge has carefully outlined the gradual defeat of the protagonist's "rational self" and his attempts to perceive a nature independent of his feelings. First, the precarious character of his resolution was revealed by his lengthy affirmations of the absence of love and his detailed enumeration of all the things that were *not* there. A second stage was his day dream, still recognized as such, in which he "saw" his beloved whom he knew to be absent. Now he has reached the final stage; nature has become a screen on which his feelings are projected without the sobering intervention of reason informing him of the subjective character of his vision. In other words, the phantom world of love now becomes the "reality" of the protagonist.

And thus the aspect of nature immediately changes,

I pass forth into light — I find myself
Beneath a weeping birch (most beautiful
Of forest trees, the Lady of the Woods),
Hard by the brink of a tall weedy rock
That overbrows the cataract. How bursts
The landscape on my sight!

The inefficacy of his former resolution is clearly indicated by his immediate association of the birch with the 'Lady of the Woods' and the fact that he does not seem disturbed any more by his reading female associations into the landscape.

The final part of the poem, then, is a description of the "dream world" of the lover, which is paradoxically the only "real" world he can still experience. He stands overlooking a valley with a cottage close to a waterfall. Then he sees a picture drawn on a strip of bark depicting,

That cottage, with its slanting chimney-smoke,
And close beside its porch a sleeping child,
His dear head pillowed on a sleeping dog —
One arm between its forelegs, and the hand
Holds loosely its small handful of wild-flowers
Unfilleted, and of unequal lengths.
A curious picture, with a masters's haste
Sketched on a strip of pinky-silver skin,
Peeled from the birchen bark! Divinest maid!
Yon bark her canvas, and those purple berries
Her pencil!

In the midst of all his enthusiasm for the divine maiden, speedily assuming the more exact identity of Isabel, it is important to keep in mind that the protagonist sees no more than a valley, a cottage, some smoke, and a picture. In "reality" there is no knowing who made the picture, but in the subjective world of the lover it is made by his beloved; in "reality" the picture is a crude sketch, in the lover's world it is a work of genius.

The language of the poem now becomes increasingly ecstatic suggesting an overflow of feelings too long suppressed. These feelings readily impose themselves on the external world,

My heart,
Why beats it thus? Through yonder coppice-wood
Needs must the pathway turn, that leads straightway
On to her father's house. She is alone!

Since the protagonist wishes to be alone with his beloved in the cottage, she *is* alone in the cottage. There is no sobering interference of reason which might have reminded him that he can be certain neither of the presence of his beloved nor of her being alone.

His world has now truly become an extension of his feelings. His situation has, in fact, become remarkably similar to the lover's in his former day dream, that 'Ill-fated youth' who wastes his manly prime

In mad love-yearning by the vacant brook,
Till sickly thoughts bewitch thine eyes, and thou
Behold'st her shadow still abiding there,
The Naiad of the mirror!

Nature had indeed been a 'vacant brook' to the protagonist, but now, owing to progressive phantom-building on the basis of a crude sketch, he has reached the stage where "sickly thoughts bewitch his eyes" and he actually seems to perceive his beloved.

In the final lines he still goes one step further and decides to participate actively in his self-created world,

The night draws on — such ways are hard to hit —
 And fit it is I should restore this sketch,
 Dropt unawares, no doubt. Why should I yearn
 To keep the relique? — 'twill but idly feed
 The passion that consumes me. Let me haste!
 The picture in my hand which she has left;
 She cannot blame me that I followed her:
 And I may be her guide the long wood through.

Thus the final stage of the protagonist's alienation is reached: he starts acting as a rational person in his irrational world of subjectivity. He obviously wishes to follow the maiden, but before doing so, he tries to think up some reason or excuse — 'fit it is I should restore this sketch' — and although he feels emotionally inclined to retain the picture, his reason convinces him that 'twill but *idly* feed/ The passion that consumes me' (*italics mine*) while the restitution of the picture and the subsequent encounter with the maiden entails the possibility of his giving *active* expression to his consuming passion.

The last line affords a final ironic reversal which reveals in a nutshell the central theme of the poem. At the beginning the confident protagonist had claimed that he was guided by a "new joy". Now he has come to recognize that for him there is no alternative but to be guided by his love and to follow the maiden. Yet in the last line he states the very opposite: he will be the maiden's guide. In this way Coleridge indicates once more that the maiden, being the concrete manifestation of the protagonist's feelings of love, is completely dependent on, or guided by, his feelings since she is created by them.

Those critics who discuss the poem at all tend to regard its ending as optimistic. M.J. Kelly affirms that the lover's resolution not to succumb to his feelings of love 'fails because it deserves to fail, and it is not out of weakness that it does, but out of strength, for beneath his despondence hope broods. The resolution was made to be broken',¹⁶ so that 'Coleridge has, in the guise of "The Picture's" "Gentle lunatic" salvaged much of his former self from the wreck of "Dejection"'.¹⁷ M. Suther, somewhat more guardedly, believes that 'If it represents a flight *from* reality, it may also represent a flight *to* a higher reality, or to the dream of a higher reality'.¹⁸

Yet since the poem asserts the inevitability of subjectivity in even more outspoken terms than the dejection ode, it cannot but be regarded as a relinquishing, however reluctant, of all the high hopes Coleridge had built on nature and a recognition that the external object is, if not wholly beyond human cognition, at least powerless and, ultimately, meaningless. Coleridge clearly implies that it may indeed be his fate to become like the 'Gentle lunatic', wishing to be dead rather than to live in a self-created world alienated not only from the life of nature and God, but, since he is caught in his own subjective vision of "reality", also from his friends and fellow-men. Ill-concealed beneath a thin veneer of ironic playfulness, 'The Picture' is, if possible, even more pessimistic than 'Dejection: an Ode'.

At the time Coleridge wrote 'Dejection: an Ode' and 'The Picture' — poems which reflect a recognition of the ascendancy of man over nature, subject over object — he also wrote 'Hymn before Sunrise' in which the ideal union of the divine life within and abroad is celebrated illustrative of the prominent role this concept continued to play in his theoretical speculations. While in theory Coleridge opted for the 'one Life' idea in an attempt to retain, at least in part, his former conviction of the divine life and beneficial influence of an autonomous nature, he was on the basis of his own experience forced to acknowledge that nature by itself is powerless to comfort or heal and that all depends on the inner disposition and activity of man.

In spite of his own inability to experience nature's healing powers, however, Coleridge never clearly renounced his former faith in nature and continued to theorize in terms of the 'one Life' idea, sometimes placing greater emphasis on the "life within", sometimes on the "life abroad". His later, temporary fascination with Schelling's *Identitäts* philosophy may indicate the seminal role this idea continued to play in his thought.

He may have considered his own failure to experience this profound union of man and nature as an essentially *personal* shortcoming which did not detract from the general validity of the theory.¹⁹ Yet this inability to feel and experience the 'one Life' in practice probably gave rise to a despairing of his own poetic powers. Since he regarded poetry as "felt thought",²⁰ and since he was unable to "feel" what he "thought", it is understandable that he became disillusioned with his own efforts to write poetry and turned to philosophy instead, in order to develop the "thought" which others could, perhaps, express in poetry. From 'To William Wordsworth' it appears that at a certain stage he entertained high hopes of his friend in this respect.

In his poetry after 1802 nature plays a decidedly minor role. As J.D. Boulger asserts, 'Nature, with which he once shared the One Life, is at worst hostile and inanimate, at best a living force across the path of which man travels by mere accident'.²¹ One of the very few later poems expressly concerned with nature, 'To Nature' (1820?), reveals Coleridge's uncertainty about its relevance to man,

It may indeed be phantasy, when I
 Essay to draw from all created things
 Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;
 And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
 Lessons of love and earnest piety.

The words 'phantasy' and 'Essay' turn these lines from the profession of hope which they ostensibly are into a confession of ignorance and doubt. The resigned tone of these lines suggests that Coleridge has lost his former feelings of despair and has come to accept the fact that the relation of nature to God and man will continue to elude him.²²

While in his early poetry nature was described as the primary source of inspiration to the poet, in his later poetry this role is taken over by other agencies, notably his (real or imagined) beloved and, most clearly in 'The Garden of Boccaccio', by art. It is interesting to note that the complications which gradually eroded his faith in nature as an external, life-inspiring force, also emerge when his beloved or art perform this office.

In 'Constancy to an Ideal Object' Coleridge is concerned with the question to what extent it is his beloved herself who inspires him and to what extent she is the product of his own idealizing mind. He candidly acknowledges that 'She [i.e. the woman] is not thou [i.e. his own idealized conception of her], and only thou art she'. As in the case of nature, then, also here the problem as to the character of external reality in its relation to man's shaping mind insistently recurs.

In the final lines of this poem Coleridge hits upon an exceptionally apt image to describe his idealized conception of his beloved. Since he has recognized that the "thou" he loves is only obliquely related to the woman as she really is, he wonders,

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
 The woodman winding westward up the glen
 At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
 The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
 Sees full before him, gliding without tread,

An image with a glory round its head;
The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues!

In these lines Coleridge recalls an experience he has had on the Brocken, one of the Harz mountains.²³ The shepherd sees his own shadow projected on the veil of morning mist and thus literally 'makes the shadow, he pursues'. Besides, the 'glory round its head' can reportedly only be seen by the one who makes the shadow, suggesting that the qualities of his beloved which seem most lovable and beautiful to him, are his own mental contribution to her image. As in his nature poetry, the tendency towards the insistence on the priority of mind in experience, is apparent here.

The poem could be read as an exposition, emotionally less involved, of similar ideas and feelings as he expressed in 'The Picture'. The fact that the Brocken image is applied to his beloved, and not to nature, demonstrates that nature has ceased to be a major concern to Coleridge. Although the image would have been eminently suitable to describe a view of nature roughly similar to that of the dejection ode, he applies it to his beloved, using a natural phenomenon as an image to illustrate his own conceptions.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have attempted to analyse the process of a profound change in Coleridge's outlook. Basically, the following picture has emerged. In his earliest poetry Coleridge appears to adhere somewhat uncritically and unconsciously to the eighteenth century beliefs and conventions with regard to nature and poetry. In the course of time he came to recognize the problems inherent in this position; these problems gradually eroded his confidence in the optimistic conception of nature and God prevalent in the eighteenth century.

More specifically, Coleridge became increasingly preoccupied with one aspect of the tradition, namely that man should be passively receptive of the light of nature, or, concomitantly, that man's inner faculties should be distrusted as potentially dangerous forces which might interfere with nature's influence. In 'The Ancient Mariner' he explored the implications of the idea that man may unconsciously, through fear or superstition, colour or influence his sense perceptions in such a way that he becomes impervious to the divine light of nature, and the fact that the mariner's predicament is not basically resolved at the end of the poem indicates the beginning of Coleridge's disillusion with the optimistic, Neoplatonic empiricism which had been the fundamental tendency of his thought up to then.

Before his journey to Germany, Coleridge had not yet developed an alternative position of his own, but it may be assumed that since his first confrontation with continental thought came at a time when his faith in a passive veneration of nature had become ridden with doubt, he was the more prepared to consider the merits of the wholly different attitude to nature found in Germany at the time. In this sense, his encounter with German thought may be regarded as a catalyst of change in a direction to which he might also have tended independently.

Coleridge's study of continental sources first of all resulted in a more sophisticated understanding of human sense perception, in that he became aware that already in the very act of perceiving, an inner faculty — whether it be called fancy, imagination, or reason — actively contributes to the for-

mation of the final, mental perception. This recognition of mental activity in perception obviously undermined his belief in passivity, and, besides, gave legitimacy to the human colouring or influencing of external nature which in 'The Ancient Mariner' he had still unequivocally rejected as an unwarranted interference with the divine forces of nature.

Nevertheless, Coleridge initially shows a marked reluctance to relinquishing his Neoplatonic, empiricist convictions. Although he came to accept human activity in perception, this did not lead to a celebration of man's ability to impose his own thoughts and feelings on external reality, as was done, for instance, by Schiller in his concept of "sentimental poetry" or by Schelling in his insistence on the truly creative character of the imagination. From such "post-German" poems as 'Dejection: an Ode' and 'The Picture' it appears that Coleridge was only prepared to accept man's priority over nature as a last — and, perhaps, desperate — resort.

Nor is this to be wondered at since an unqualified acceptance of the imagination along German lines inevitably implies alienation from external reality. If one embraces the idea that man can — and the poet should — create his own reality through his imagination, nature-as-it-is-in-itself is completely lost sight of. And since nature was in Coleridge's thought intimately connected with the divine life-force inherent in it, he may have considered this too high a price to pay. Moreover, as he had already shown in 'The Ancient Mariner', he was deeply conscious of the psychological hell implicit in alienation.

'The Picture' is revealing in this respect. In this troubled poem Coleridge on the one hand accepts, feels forced to accept, the tendency of the human mind ruled by a consuming passion to impose its thoughts and feelings on nature, while on the other hand he shows his profound awareness of the alienation from nature, man, and possibly God this may give rise to. It indicates the depth of Coleridge's struggle with these issues that in the very poem in which he proffers a view of the imagination comparable to that of the German romantics, he already contemplates its possibly negative consequences.

In this connection it is interesting to note how closely the situation Coleridge developed in 'The Picture' resembles Thomas Mann's mildly ironic description of the consequences of romantic thought in his short story 'Tristan'. In this story the romantic artist Spinell, impelled by his Wagnerian dreams, turns the inconspicuous, middle class Frau Klötterjahn into an ideal, Isolde-like woman of his own creation, not unlike the Coleridgean dream

figure of Isabel. And throughout the story Thomas Mann subtly shows the irreconcilability of the world created by Spinell's highly strung imagination and the "real, every day world" of the uncomplicated businessman Klöterjahn, which Spinell is both unable and unwilling to face. This resemblance between Mann's perceptive criticism of the romantic conception of human genius and 'The Picture' suggests that from the outset Coleridge was conscious of the potentially alienating effect of an unimpeded endorsement of the activities of the imagination, which were still so enthusiastically celebrated in Germany at the time.

In his theories Coleridge tried to steer a middle course between English empiricism and German romanticism. This resulted in the 'one Life' idea which assumes the presence of divine life both in man and nature. Thus he attempted to place man and nature on an equal footing hoping in this way to avoid both the extreme of empiricism — man becoming an extension of nature — and that of German romanticism — nature becoming an extension of the human psyche.

In spite of its theoretical attractiveness, however, the fact that Coleridge was unable to express the 'one Life' idea in his poetry gives rise to the suspicion that it was too contrived to be really effective and convincing in practice. Perhaps it is true to say that it was a valiant but doomed attempt to reconcile two positions which are ultimately irreconcilable. Moreover, the "ennobling interchange" of the life within and without, which is central to the 'one Life' idea, appears to be some sort of mystical union with the divine along Christian or Neoplatonic lines, and such mystical experiences of unity are by their very nature extremely rare.

The importance of the radical change in Coleridge's thought which has been outlined in this study can scarcely be overrated. Because of it, he could become one of the prime promulgators of continental ideas in England which, even apart from his own contribution to these ideas, justifies the central place he holds in English literary history.

What is striking in his confrontation with German thought, however one values its outcome, is the intellectual honesty and tenacity with which he probed the issues that were of vital concern to him. In his attempt to come to terms with these issues he had his 'mountains', his moments of confidence, insight, and lucidity, just as his 'cliffs of fall', his moments of despair and uncertainty, which were, as especially his poetry reveals, indeed 'Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed'. Perhaps the many negative aspects which overshadow his career — such as his exaggerated claims to intellectual

distinction and his plagiarisms — should be understood against the background of this struggle for understanding and recognition, as a consequence of the fact that, in Hopkins' words, 'Nor does long our small/ Durance deal with that steep or deep'.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1) Abrams, 2, p. 14.

2) Cf. van Tieghem, p. 1, 'Comme la Renaissance avait préparé l'âge classique de la littérature européenne, le romantisme inaugure son âge moderne'; cf. also de Deugd, 1, p. 179, it is not always recognized that 'many problems that are considered as characteristic of modern times came into existence during the Romantic period or originate in, and are determined by, a Romantic way of thinking' (translation mine).

3) Willey, 2, p. 9.

4) N.Frye in Williams, p. 317.

5) Abrams, 1, p. 21.

6) *Ibid.*, p. 22.

7) The most accurate description of the development of Coleridge's attitude to external nature that I know of, is presented in Suther's brief, but competent outline, pp. 141-149.

8) Some studies of Coleridge overestimate the notebooks; by their very nature they do not amount to more than the quick and random notation of sudden thoughts and flashes of insight and there is no knowing whether some of these were not considered by Coleridge as thoughts of the moment, almost as quickly abandoned as they were written down.

9) Frye, p. 5.

10) The term is used in Wellek, 3, p.124; chapter 10 of Wellek and Warren's study gives a critical description and evaluation of the "history of ideas approach" to literature. A judicious and qualified defence of this approach is found in Mooij, chapter V.

11) Wellek's four objections are found in Jordan, pp. 238-239.

12) *CL*, I, p. 245.

13) Cf. Piper, pp. 50-51; the second quotation is from Priestley.

14) Berkeley, V, p. 136.

15) *Ibid.*, p. 118.

16) *Ibid.*, p. 114.

17) Cudworth, p. 163; for clarity's sake I have reversed Cudworth's ubiquitous italics.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 163.

19) Cf. Wellek, 3, p. 112, 'The value for the exegesis of a poetic text of a knowledge of the history of philosophy and of general thought can scarcely be overrated'; cf. also de Deugd, 4, where the difference in function of literature and philosophy is emphasized.

20) *CL*, I, p. 215.

21) *BL*, II, pp. 25-26; cf. Wordsworth's description of poetry as 'the most philosophic of all writing', in Wordsworth, II, p. 394.

22) Wordsworth, II, p. 395.

23) *CL*, II, p. 864.

24) Cf. Richards, p. 1.

25) Orsini, pp. 7-8.

26) Fruman, p. 119.

27) For examples, see Fruman, pp. 3-12.

28) Schneider, p. 156.

29) The possible date of composition of 'Kubla Khan' is briefly discussed in chapter X of this study.

30) H. Read in Coburn, p. 96.

31) Bate, p. 34; cf. Miller, p. 78, 'Not only does he give ample evidence of having read every important scientific work, ancient and modern, but he feels it necessary to correct all the errors in logic and fact which he discovers'.

32) Lowes, p. 43.

33) Fogle, p. 44.

34) All Coleridge's and Southey's borrowings are listed in Whalley, I, and in an Appendix in Deschamps. The matter of Coleridge's reading is complicated by his close acquaintance with Southey who was a dedicated reader no less than Coleridge. It is conceivable that a sense of rivalry developed between the two which may have given rise to somewhat exaggerated claims; cf. Southey's slighting, but perhaps not wholly unfounded remark, made in 1808, 'Hartley was ousted by Berkeley, Berkeley by Spinoza, and Spinoza by Plato; when I last saw him Jacob Behmen had some chance of coming in' (quoted in Fruman, p. 118).

35) Lamb, p. 250.

36) Cf. Orsini, p. 9.

37) Barfield, p. 5.

38) McFarland presents a rather sophisticated argument to defend his position that 'dates are only schematically, not substantively, important in examining Coleridge's development' (p. 161). Though I am not entirely certain what exactly the difference between 'schematically' and 'substantively' amounts to, it is only fair to summarize his arguments. Firstly, he argues that development does not mean progress, but rather "Entwicklung", an 'unwrapping of something already there' (p. 161). Secondly, he affirms that essentially someone remains the same throughout his life, 'Though the data of the world change for us, and their connexions with our understanding, the eyes looking out from our time-eroded bodies are the lights of a soul that does not change' (p. 162). The examples he gives of this "unchanging core" of Coleridge's work are, also by his own admission, trivial (cf. pp. 163-167). McFarland's view thus comprises a dualism between soul and body, the assumption that man's soul does not change, and the idea that it is the task of the critic to look beyond bodily appearances in an attempt to understand and describe this unchanging soul. Apart from the fact that one may not share this basically Platonic conception of man, it

seems impossible to differentiate, otherwise than on the basis of one's subjective intuition, between those aspects of a writer's work which are ephemeral in that they are connected with the 'data of the world' and his 'understanding' — which are subject to change and would thus require a chronological approach — and those aspects which are vital in that they reveal man's unchanging soul. On the whole, McFarland's arguments seem too contrived and idiosyncratic to be really convincing. Obviously, if one is not primarily interested in understanding Coleridge's development, but rather in the tendency of his thought on a particular topic, strictly chronological concerns may be overruled by others in the presentation of the relevant material. Nevertheless, a complete disregard of chronology easily gives rise to confusion and misunderstanding.

Some methodological remarks made by Lockridge (in Crawford, pp.47-48) may further illustrate this. Lockridge contends that 'Though there are, of course, many fundamental changes over the years in what Coleridge *believed*, the essential pattern of his thought is not confined in a linear temporal axis; rather it is a multidimensional consideration and reconsideration of images, issues, and ideas, often progressive, sometimes retrogressive'. A distinction is made here between Coleridge's conscious beliefs which change in time, and the essence of his thought beyond time, along lines similar to McFarland's. In Lockridge's conception it is the task of the critic to construct out of Coleridge's 'scattered speculations' this underlying, consistent core of thought so that the critic provides 'something of the unified construction which Coleridge so admired and did not himself achieve'. It is clear that from this point of view chronological concerns are of minor importance, since the critic is interested in this essence beyond time; as Lockridge puts it, 'Thus the best approach to Coleridge may be one in which passages written even decades apart are spliced together'. Lockridge's approach stands open to two dangers. The first is that the unity or consistency of thought that finally emerges from such an approach might conceivably give a better indication of the preconceptions and ingenuity of a particular critic than of Coleridge's own convictions, since it is up to the critic to select freely from the whole body of Coleridge's work those remarks which he regards as significant. In this connection it is not surprising that Lockridge refers approvingly to Barfield's study of Coleridge (Barfield, 1) as an example of the approach he proposes; but it is exactly the weakness of this study that Barfield presents a Coleridge whose ideas curiously resemble Barfield's own, as he has expounded them in, for instance, Barfield, 2. While the first danger is that of imposing a greater unity or consistency on the material than is warranted, the second danger is the opposite: that the critic presents a confusing amalgam of apparently contradictory statements picked from different stages of Coleridge's development from which one cannot but derive the impression that Coleridge rather uncertainly jumped from one position to the other. All depends on the selection of the critic. This second danger appears implicitly from Lockridge's admission at the beginning of his study of Coleridge's moral vision, 'While I have attempted to find principles of progression in his thought, I have not pursued them to hard-and-fast conclusions that would do violence to the speculative tenor of his mind. *An eddying effect will, I hope, to some extent remain*, for he was often circling around his own conclusions, often qualifying or undercutting them' (Lockridge, p. 27; italics mine). To be sure, Coleridge himself may at times have been uncertain or confused, but it is hardly the critic's task to add to the confusion by "splicing together" passages written 'even decades apart'.

CHAPTER I

1) N.F. Blake in Davies, p. 81.

2) 'Spring', ll. 853-866.

3) Thomson's view of the relation between God and nature is a matter of critical disagreement. Deane asserts that 'The verse of the Thomson school especially, is pervaded by a wholesome, semi-pagan, natural piety; it is more often implied than expressed, and the concealment usually results in poetic gain, but when it is explicit it takes the form of a pantheistic sense of communion with nature, as in *The Seasons* themselves' (Deane, p. 64); Reynolds, on the other hand, believes that 'The whole tenor of his poems goes to show that he saw in nature not God himself but God's hand' (Reynolds, p. 98).

4) 'Spring', ll. 899-903.

5) 'Spring', ll. 905.

6) Cf. 'Autumn', l. 672, where nature is described as teaching man 'the moral song'.

7) 'Spring', l. 275.

8) 'Spring', ll. 307-309.

9) Baker, p. 88. Dekker, p. 118 and Fairchild, III, pp. 188 and 288 recognize Akenside's importance. In view of the character of Akenside's thought it is not surprising that his position is differently interpreted, some critics regarding him primarily as an exponent of Lockean sensationalism, others stressing the Neoplatonic elements in his poetry. Some critical views are briefly indicated in Marsh, p. 36.

10) This sentence paraphrases Deschamps' statement, 'dans sa jeunesse Coleridge se livra à une véritable enquête philosophique dont la ligne générale est bien celle d'un effort pour concilier la vision platonicienne du monde avec un système achevé et cohérent; il se tourna successivement vers Hartley, Berkeley, Spinoza, Leibnitz, et Kant' (Deschamps, pp. 378-379). Deschamps, in turn, paraphrased this statement from Fairchild, III, p. 306.

11) Usually, Coleridge's Neoplatonism is attributed to his reading of the Cambridge Platonists, especially Cudworth. Yet Cudworth's lengthy and somewhat disorganized study seems an unlikely book to turn to if one wants a clear and succinct exposition of the (Neo)Platonic vision of nature.

12) In Coleridge's first lecture on revealed religion, for instance, the following passage is found, 'The Omnipotent has unfolded to us the Volume of the World, that there we may read the Transcript of himself. In Earth or Air the meadow's purple stores, the Moons mild radiance, or the Virgins form Blooming with rosy smiles, we see portrayed the bright Impressions of the eternal Mind' (L, p. 94). This is an almost literal paraphrase of *Pleasures of the Imagination*, I, ll. 99-108, first version. Also Southey expressed his indebtedness to Akenside, cf. Renwick, p. 129.

13) Fairchild, II, p. 325.

14) A, I, ll. 65-66. There are two versions of *Pleasures of the Imagination*, the poem from which all quotations of Akenside are taken. The first one was published in 1744 (hereafter A), the second between 1757 and 1770 (hereafter B).

15) B, I, l. 574; A, II, ll. 313-315.

16) A, II, l. 319.

17) Cf. B, I, ll. 569-572.

18) B, II, ll. 261-262.

19) B, I, ll. 432-436.

20) B, II, ll. 177-184.

21) B, II, ll. 49, 56.

22) A, I, ll. 99-108.

23) B, I, ll. 619-627.

24) B, II, ll. 58, 52; cf. B, I, ll. 293-294.

25) B, II, l. 137.

26) B, II, ll. 111-112.

27) B, I, ll. 287-294.

28) A, I, ll. 123-124.

29) Cf. *The Spectator*, nos. 411-421, in Addison, pp. 593-609; cf. Kennedy, pp. 1, 44, who argues that distinguishing between fancy and imagination was not customary at the time, both Addison and Hutcheson using the terms indiscriminately.

30) B, II, ll. 1-4.

31) Cf. Hardy; the background of Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination is aptly summarized by Engell in his introduction to *BL*, pp. lxxxi-civ.

32) B, II, l. 482.

33) B, II, ll. 393-598 deal with the dangers of fancy.

34) B, II, ll. 102-103.

35) B, II, l. 198.

36) B, II, ll. 276-277; cf. Marsh, p. 45, 'In general, Akenside's conception of imagination is dialectical or twofold: a radical distinction is made between the common perceptions (fancies) of the faculty and those higher, nobler perceptions controlled by the harmonizing influence of the divine ideas, the ultimate forms of reality'.

37) A, III, ll. 312-324; cf. A, III, ll. 338-347.

38) Cf. Hartley, I, prop. 8-13. Hartley argues that sensation causes sensory vibrations in the brain. These sensory vibrations by being repeated leave miniature vibrations in the brain. In this way clusters of miniature vibrations are formed which may be set in motion by one simple idea (i.e. one miniature vibration) out of a cluster being activated through sensation or association.

39) Hartley, I, pp. 80-81.

40) Hartley, II, p. 313; quoted in Fairchild, III, p. 279.

41) Other similarities are, for instance, that where Akenside believes that fancy should be checked by reason, Hartley is of the opinion that the pleasures of the imagination should be regulated by benevolence, piety, and moral sense since otherwise they will lead to vanity, scepticism, and self-conceit (Hartley, II, pp. 243-245). Also the notion of the ultimate good and happiness to all which Hartley regards as the necessary outcome of his system of association is found in Akenside (A, II, ll. 329-333).

42) Haven, p. 481.

43) Cf. McFarland, pp. 274-282.

44) *The Task*, V, ll. 891-895.

45) *Ibid.*, VI, ll. 221-222.

46) 'Retirement', l. 54.

47) *Ibid.*, ll. 95-96.

48) *The Task*, V, ll. 785-814.

49) *Ibid.*, V, ll. 742-747.

50) *Ibid.*, V, ll. 805-806.

51) *Ibid.*, V, ll. 750-755.

52) 'Retirement', l. 339.

53) *Ibid.*, l. 353.

54) *The Task*, V, ll. 779-780.

55) Reynolds, p. 358; pp. 356-358 of her study present a survey of the most characteristic features of eighteenth century nature poetry, together with many examples.

CHAPTER II

1) Cf. Swinburne's implied criticism of Coleridge's early poetry, 'His style indeed was a plant of strangely slow growth, but perfect and wonderful in its final flower' (in Jones, p. 87); contemporaneous reviews of his early poetry give a similar impression: they are all mildly favourable, but no reviewer sees anything special in the poems, see Jackson.

2) Gérard, p. 49.

3) A comparable transcendental vision inspired by nature seems to be hinted at in 'To the Evening Star' (1790?) where the poet gazing at the star is filled with 'Pure joy and calm Delight', to such an extent that he "all spirit seems to grow", while in the last lines this "spirit growing" is connected with life after death.

4) Wimsatt, p. 109.

5) This is at least what I take Wimsatt to mean although the sentence, 'The river landscape is both the occasion of reminiscence and the source of the metaphors by which reminiscence is described' (p. 109) makes one wonder whether he does not misread the poem, turning it into another 'Tintern Abbey'-like poem in which the landscape present to the eyes of the poet is invested with added significance due to his childhood memories of the scene. In this sonnet it is nowhere apparent that the poet is anywhere near the river, and even if this were the case, the fact would remain that it is only concerned with memories and not with an implied comparison between his "present" experience of the river and his memories. Moreover, the detailed description of the river only serves its purpose — to indicate the acuteness of his sense of loss — if one supposes the river not to be present to his eyes. Recollection in tranquillity is an appropriate description of the poet's activity in this poem. The poem is an instance of how 'On my way,'

Visions of Childhood! oft have ye beguil'd/ Lone manhood's cares', the last line 'Ah! that once more I were a careless Child!' expressing not only nostalgia for childhood, but also for the scenes of childhood the poet so often revisits in his mind. If one wanted to, one could regard the river as a symbol of childhood, but hardly as a concealed symbol of remembrance.

6) Wimsatt, p. 109.

7) *Ibid.*, p. 109.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 110.

9) *Ibid.*, p. 110.

10) One could raise other objections to Wimsatt's exposition, like the fact that he takes a more or less conventional eighteenth century poem as typical of romanticism, or that it is arbitrary in that it would not be difficult to find nature descriptions in Coleridge's early poetry that no amount of ingenuity could transform into a metaphor. If the early Coleridge uses nature as a metaphor, he always makes this sufficiently clear. Since in such a case he always clarifies the vehicle of the metaphor by explicitly stating the tenor, it is clear that if no tenor is stated, there is no metaphor, but a description of nature considered significant in its own right, although it may, of course, acquire a significance beyond itself in the poetic context. One example may suffice. In his early poetry Coleridge often uses the very conventional association of the myrtle tree with innocence and love, and each time the association is explicitly stated (cf. 'Lines on an Autumnal Evening', ll. 40, 48, 61; 'To a Young Lady', l. 30; later the myrtle braid is offered, with the poem, to 'Beauty's saintly shrine', Sara; 'Sonnet to Robert Southey', l. 8; and a later instance, 'To an Unfortunate Woman', l. 1).

It may be added here that I do not think the approach of trying to attribute a more or less consistent pattern of symbolic significance to natural phenomena particularly helpful. Such an approach is found in, e.g., Berkoben and Suther. In the first place, the results are often contradictory; Berkoben concludes that the sun 'generally extends the traditional identification with God to include not only the godhead but religion as well' (Berkoben, p. 34), whereas Suther asserts that 'Sunlight is associated with the normal, even happy every day world' (Suther, p. 76). Secondly, the conclusions that can be drawn from such an approach are often vague. Suther concludes that the wind is sometimes 'the destroyer of spiritual power', and at other times 'the source of creative agitation' (Suther, p. 117) and what can be the possible significance of his elaborate tracing of "half-lights" (i.e. moonlight, starlight, and twilight) through the whole body of Coleridge's poetry if it results in the disarming conclusion that 'The atmosphere created by the half-lights is sometimes an atmosphere of joy, sometimes one of grief, sometimes a strange mixture of both' (Suther, p. 115). But the main objection is that it gives rise to a reading of the nature passages in which the sun and the wind are no longer primarily the sun and the wind, but have become elements of some vague and elusive symbolic cluster. Magnuson is right when he rejects the approach of 'explaining the significance of one image, or set of images, by referring to a particular use of that image, or set, in other poems' by arguing that 'to explain one poem by another is to make assumptions about the consistency of symbolism that the poetry will not support' (Magnuson, p. VIII).

11) See, e.g., 'To the Muse' and 'An Invocation' where the muse is described as a 'Sure soother of the sigh', as joy-inspiring, as soul-exalting. Both Coleridge's use of nature and the invocations of the muse seem to mask many unanswered, and possibly unasked, questions concerning inspiration.

12) These lines could be construed as an early example of Coleridge's interest in Hartleyan associationism, the original vibration of the nightingale's song setting in motion many miniature

vibrations in the poet's mind. But these lines can not only be traced to Hartley, but also to Akenside whose associationist passages were discussed above, and also in Thomson similar vaguely associationist fragments can be found, e.g. in 'Autumn', ll. 1008-1014, where nature is described as a force of inspiration, animating the imagination, occasioning many 'fleet ideas' which 'far/Beyond dim earth exalt[s] the swelling thought'.

13) Yarlott believes that in this fragment Coleridge makes an 'imagist use of moonlight'; he argues that moonlight is associated with the poet's mistress, so that 'moonless night' denotes his 'resigned acceptance that the moonlight ... must now give place to night' (Yarlott, pp. 61-62). But it is more correct to regard these lines as a description of the loss of inspiration owing to the growing darkness of nature, also because the association of mistress with moonlight is not as clear as Yarlott suggests.

14) *CL*, p. 139; December 17, 1794.

15) Deschamps' statement about Coleridge's attitude to nature in his early poetry sums up my discussion, 'Plus que le spectacle des beautés du paysage, ce que Coleridge va chercher dans la nature, c'est l'occasion de se retrouver dans l'univers tranquille et splendide de sa méditation intérieure, où l'imagination et le rêve ont autant de place que la spéculation proprement dite' (Deschamps, p. 123).

16) Cf. note 3 of this chapter.

17) Quoted in Deschamps, p. 377; cf. p. 186 and pp. 374-379 where Deschamps presents a similar position; see also McFarland, p. 199 and Baker, pp. 67-76. Deschamps and Wilde favour Plato, McFarland and Baker Plotinus as the main influence on the early Coleridge. In view of the general character of the early poetry, the distinction seems rather insignificant.

18) Willey, I, p. 276.

19) Besides 'Life', there is one other poem, 'Ode' (1792), in which nature is presented as teacher (l. 17) and loosely associated with the divine (cf. 'the sacred Balm', l. 20). Since the authorship of the poem is dubious, however, it would be unwise to attach too much importance to this.

CHAPTER III

1) *CL*, I, p. 84.

2) A first draft of 'The Eolian Harp' was probably written in August 1795, while the poem was first published in something like its definitive form in 1796. 'Religious Musings' was begun in 1794 but was not finished until 1796. 'The Destiny of Nations', originally part of Southey's *Joan of Arc*, was published in January 1796 at the latest, cf. Cottle, II, pp. 6, 51-53.

3) Some critics are not aware of the later date of the 'one Life' passage, e.g. G. McLean Harper who asserts that this passage 'anticipates by nearly three years the grand climax of "Tintern Abbey"' (in Abrams, 3, p. 148); cf. Baker, pp. 70-71.

4) Internal evidence suggests that the fragment was written either in 1802 or in 1807. When publishing *Sibylline Leaves*, he presumably added this "old fragment" to the poem as an afterthought, in the *Errata*.

5) The letter of September 10, 1802, to Sotheby is one of the first indications of the 'one Life' idea in Coleridge's work (*CL*, II, p. 864); cf. chapter VIII of this study.

6) Deschamps, p. 191; cf. Adair, p. 34; Yarlott, p. 93; Fogle, pp. 24, 26. Some of these critics have such a broad and vaguely defined conception of the 'one Life' notion that it seems to cover almost any sort of relation between man and nature. Coleridge, however, clearly means a *reciprocal* relation, cf. note 5 of this chapter.

7) The 1795 draft is printed as an appendix in *CP*. The 1796 version can be found in Everest, pp. 198-199.

8) Yarlott, p. 92; he refers to a later version of this passage; cf. Mellor, p. 153.

9) The term is used in Harding, p. 44. He interprets the opening of the poem in a way similar to mine.

10) The reference to Sara's 'polish'd Sense' is only found in the 1795 draft and was changed in the 1796 version to a more general comparison of the evening star with wisdom.

11) Quoted in de Deugd, I, p. 62. The wind-harp image often recurs in eighteenth and nineteenth century poetry. Coleridge probably knew Akenside's somewhat confusing use of the image, 'That voice, to which is Beauty's frame divine/ As is the cunning of the master's hand/ To the sweet accent of the well-tun'd lyre' (*B*, I, ll. 688-690). For accounts of the wind-harp image, see Abrams, 'The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor', in Abrams, 3; Dekker, chapter III; Grigson.

12) Suther, p. 175.

13) *A*, I, ll. 113-124.

14) Cf. *B*, IV, ll. 83-84.

15) Gérard, p. 48.

16) Cf. the line quoted below, 'And each one's Tunes be that which each calls I'.

17) 'Tremble' is, of course, reminiscent of Hartley's vibrations and mini-vibrations.

18) Everest, p. 210.

19) A brief survey of critical opinion. Stallknecht argues Coleridge's indebtedness to Boehme, on the basis of some striking similarities. This view is adopted by Dekker (pp. 115-116), J. Wordsworth (p. 191) and Beer (2, pp. 24ff.). The problem is that there is very little evidence of Coleridge's acquaintance with Boehme's work at this time: in 1817 he claims to have read Boehme's *Aurora* at school (*CL*, IV, 751), and there is one isolated reference in the notebooks of 1795, 1796 (*CN*, I, 174). Other critics favour Plotinus as a source, e.g. Baker p. 171. This view is aptly rejected by Everest, p. 210. Others mention Hartley and Priestley as likely sources, e.g. Fairchild, III, p. 280; Everest, pp. 203-204; Willey, 3, p. 226. As far as the content of the passage is concerned, this seems the most likely source. McFarland characterizes the passage as 'Neoplatonic Spinozism' (p. 165). Finally, Warnock, who believes that Coleridge's philosophical views 'can never be taken seriously by professionals' since 'He knows nothing about philosophy' (p. 108) dismisses the passage as vaguely pantheistic, which is hardly surprising as in her version of the poem the organic harps 'tumble' into thought (p. 110).

20) Cf. Watson, p. 66 and Everest, p. 221.

21) *L*, p. LV.

22) Yarlott, p. 95.

23) Gérard, p. 46.

24) *CL*, I, p. 154; cf. *L*, pp. 224-225.

25) Hartley, I, p. 114.

26) On the one hand the argument assumes that man is willy nilly shaped by his environment, while on the other hand it concludes that man should be passively open to his environment to be shaped by it. In other words, man should try to become what he, according to the theory, already is.

27) Pantisocracy was to be an 'experiment of human Perfectibility on the banks of the *Susquehanna*' where 'a small Company of chosen Individuals' were to benefit from the combined effect of 'the innocence of the patriarchal Age' and 'the knowledge and genuine refinements of European culture'; cf. *F*, pp. 146-147.

28) *CL*, I, p. 126.

29) Locke, p. 123; II, IX, 15.

30) *Ibid.*, p. 98; II, I, 24.

31) *Ibid.*, p. 98; II, I, 25.

32) *Ibid.*, p. 119; II, IX, 1. T.J. Diffey gives a short exposition of Locke's views in the broader framework of romanticism, in Prickett, 2, pp. 166-172.

33) Cf., e.g., 'I do not particularly admire Rousseau — Bishop Taylor, old Baxter, David Hartley & the bishop of Cloyne are *my men*', *CL*, I, p. 245; November 1, 1796.

34) In the introduction of his edition of Hartley's *Observations*, Priestley refers to it as being 'clogged with a whole system of moral and religious knowledge; which, however excellent, is, in a great measure, foreign to it'; quoted in McFarland, p. 311.

35) Baker, p. 22.

36) Also Ayer regards Berkeley as an empiricist, cf. Ayer, pp. 41, 70-72.

37) Beach, p. 123.

38) Cf. Oscamp, chapter I.

39) Berkeley, II, p. 212; italics his.

40) *Ibid.*, p. 215; italics his.

41) Muirhead, p. 46.

42) Berkeley, V, p. 141; section 305.

43) Bender, p. 86 (my translation). Jessop in his introduction to *Siris* affirms, 'In *Siris* I can see a deep alteration of temper and a larger theatre of interest, but no *volte-face*; an excursion from his older doctrines, not a cancellation of them' (Berkeley, V, p. 12); cf. also his remark that 'Sensation remains for him the only way of becoming acquainted with the corporeal; its objects are still for him just what they appear to be, and they are realities, not subjective effects of a matter alleged to be sensorily inaccessible to us. He has not moved towards either Descartes or Locke. Sensation is veridical apprehension. *Siris* introduces no change in these respects' (*ibid.*, p. 15).

44) Hartley, II, p. 66.

45) Hartley, I, p. 510.

- 46) Haven, p. 483; he quotes from Hartley, II, p. 280.
- 47) Both Hartley and Berkeley were, of course, Christians. What is here primarily at stake, however, is the issue of divine immanence, and in this respect there is little difference between Neoplatonism and the type of Christianity to which both Hartley and Berkeley pledged allegiance. Since "Christianity" without further specification would be too vague a description of their position, I have preferred using the term "Neoplatonism".
- 48) Berkeley, V, p. 123; section 260.
- 49) See note 34 of this chapter.
- 50) *CL*, I, pp. 137, 147; December 11 and 29, 1794.
- 51) Adair, p. 16.
- 52) McFarland, p. 87.
- 53) Fairchild, III, p. 281; cf. Hartley, I, pp. 500-510; II, prop. 14-16.
- 54) Gérard, p. 45.
- 55) Quoted in Piper, p. 51; from Priestley, p. 42.
- 56) *CL*, pp. 192-193; March 20, 1796.
- 57) In *Alciphron* Berkeley comes out strongly in defence of human freedom, Berkeley, III, p. 310. For a more detailed descriptions of the limits Berkeley imposed on freedom elsewhere in is philosophy, see chapter V of this study.
- 58) Berkeley, V, p. 134; section 288.
- 59) The question of the date is discussed in Everest, p. 236.
- 60) Gérard, p. 50.
- 61) Cudworth, p. 538.
- 62) *Ibid.*, pp. 537-539; italics reversed.

CHAPTER IV

- 1) J. Wordsworth, p. 195. Coleridge had met Wordsworth once in 1795. His first acquaintance with Wordsworth's poetry dates from 1793 when he read 'Descriptive Sketches'.
- 2) J. Wordsworth presents a detailed account of the literary relationship of the two poets up to 1797, see esp. pp. 184-201 of his study.
- 3) Cf. Wellek's statement, 'There is a continuity in style and ideas between Thomson, Akenside, Dyer, and Wordsworth which can hardly be exaggerated' (Wellek, I, II, p. 136); cf. Fairchild, III, pp. 186ff.; also the philosophical sources of Wordsworth's poetry show a marked resemblance with Coleridge's; Beach mentions Hartley, Cudworth, and Berkeley; a summary of his views is found in Beach, pp. 202-208.
- 4) Wordsworth, I, p. 44.
- 5) *Ibid.*, I, p. 44.

6) In 1798, Wordsworth is rather more outspoken in this respect, as appears from the following lines of 'Expostulation and Reply', 'Nor less I deem that there are Powers/ Which of themselves our minds impress;/ That we can feed this mind of ours/ In a wise passiveness'. Perhaps the explicitness of these lines owes something to Coleridge's influence; on passivity in Wordsworth, see Beach, pp. 135-137.

7) Wordsworth, I, p. 34.

8) *Ibid.*, I, p. 74.

9) *Ibid.*, I, p. 72.

10) *Ibid.*, I, p. 187.

11) *CP*, II, p. 545.

12) *CP*, II, p. 568.

13) *CP*, II, p. 583.

14) Wordsworth, I, pp. 207-208.

15) Hartley, I, p. 385; cf. Wellek's statement, 'Wordsworth disconcertingly vacillates among three epistemological conceptions. At times he makes imagination purely subjective, an imposition of human mind on the real world. At other times he makes it an illumination beyond the control of the conscious mind and even beyond the individual soul. But most frequently he takes an in-between position which favors the idea of collaboration, "An ennobling interchange/ Of action from within and from without"' (Wellek, I, II, p. 145). If one leaves out chronological considerations, this is a valid statement.

16) Wordsworth, I, pp. 314-315. On the dating of this poem, see J. Wordsworth, pp. 7-8.

17) The phrase is used in Everest, p. 245. His study offers a detailed analysis of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' together with a discussion of its relation to 'Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree', see pp. 242-258.

18) Wordsworth, I, p. 93.

19) The discussion will concentrate on the first version of the poem which Coleridge sent to Southey on July 9, 1797.

20) Suther, p. 146.

21) Lamb, p. 44; letter of May 27, 1796.

22) Lamb, p. 62; letter to Coleridge of January 10, 1797.

23) In the published 1800 version of the poem, the friends actually 'wind down' into the dell, which is artistically more satisfactory.

24) This is supported by Coleridge's note to the passage in his letter to Southey, 'You remember I am a *Berkleyan*'. J. Wordsworth emphasizes Priestley's importance; the landscape, he asserts, 'has life because in a Priestleyan sense it is an extension of God. It is also categorically described as a "thing" — Coleridge could perfectly well have used the term "idea" had he chosen — and the fact that it comes to "*seem/ Less gross than bodily*", presumably implies that it has a material existence' (J. Wordsworth, p. 197). I cannot agree. The elusive phrase '*seem/ Less gross than bodily*' can, to my mind, only mean that the landscape seems to become 'bodily', 'a living thing'. In other words, it becomes so overwhelmingly real to Charles that it almost acquires a (material) existence in itself. If this is accepted, the phrase can very well be reconciled with Berkeley's

conception of the external world. Besides, the words 'clothe th' Almighty Spirit' do not point to an identification of God and nature, but rather to an affirmation of the divine Spirit speaking its sensory language to the human spirit through nature. As Fairchild states, 'Nature is the revelation of the Almighty Spirit whose essence is Love and Beauty' (Fairchild, II, p. 289.) Also passivity is not inconsistent with Berkeley's philosophy. For a completely different view of the ideational background of the poem, see Parker, esp. pp. 37-38, where the poem is related to Richard Baxter.

25) A.R. Jones in Brett, p. 98.

26) Parker states that 'For Coleridge ... even such a traditional harbinger of evil and ruin as the rook ... has a liberating "charm"' (Parker, p. 51).

27) Beer, 2, p. 120. Beer makes this statement on the basis of considerations different from mine.

28) Everest, p. 256.

CHAPTER V

1) Adair, p. 41.

2) Warren, p. 222.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 214.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 227.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 229.

6) *Ibid.*, p. 233.

7) *Ibid.*, p. 257.

8) Warren believes that there is a continuity in Coleridge's thought which authorizes the critic to interpret his poetry by referring to his much later theories. In the introduction I have argued against this. Warren is certainly wrong, however, when he states, without presenting any arguments, 'As early as 1794, he was ... thinking of the mind as an active thing, the "shaping mind", and if, in one sense, we grant the power of mind we have broken the iron chain of necessity and the individual becomes a responsible agent' (Warren, p. 226)

9) In Jones, p. 188.

10) Bostetter, p. 109.

11) *Ibid.*, p. 123.

12) In Jones, p. 190.

13) Cf. House, pp. 102-110 and Adair, pp. 56-61.

14) Beer, 1, p. 168.

15) *Ibid.*, p. 173.

16) In Beer, 2, esp. pp. 167-177. This later interpretation centres on the role the, what he calls, primary and secondary consciousness play in the poem.

17) Lowes, p. 303.

- 18) R. Haven's view as described in Harding, p. 57.
- 19) House, p. 113.
- 20) Bostetter in Jones, p. 194.
- 21) 'The Destiny of Nations', I. 35; *CP*, I, p. 132.
- 22) 'Religious Musings', ll. 396-398; *CP*, I, p. 124.
- 23) 'Religious Musings', ll. 149-152; *CP*, I, p. 114.
- 24) Hartley, I, p. 385.
- 25) Cf. 'The Destiny of Nations', ll. 285-288; *CP*, I, p. 140.
- 26) All quotations from the Revised Version of the Authorized Version; *The Wisdom of Solomon* 17: 4-6; 9-10; 18-21.
- 27) cf. 17: 8, 11.
- 28) Cudworth, p. 68; italics reversed.
- 29) In a letter of November 15, 1796, to Poole, Coleridge describes Charles Lloyd as projecting "phantoms" on the external world, 'Charles Lloyd has been very ill ... He falls all at once into a kind of Night-mair: and all the Realities round him mingle with, and form part of, the strange Dream. All his voluntary powers are suspended; but he perceives every thing & hears every thing, and whatever he perceives & hears he perverts into the substance of his delirious Vision' (*CL*, I, p. 257).
- 30) *Pleasures of the Imagination*, III, ll. 211-212 (first version)
- 31) De Quincey, II, p. 145; cf. Magnuson, p. 50, 'If de Quincey and Wordsworth are correct, Coleridge's purpose was to follow the emotions of a man who in a delirium believed himself under a curse and persecuted by supernatural forces; the interest was not in the supernatural itself but in the mental aberrations of a person who thought that the supernatural was a reality independent of his own mind'.
- 32) In Jones, pp. 29-30; also in *CL*, I, p. 602n. The full statement runs as follows, 'The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the controul of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural: secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon: thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated'; see also the discussion of 'Peter Bell' at the end of this chapter.
- 33) In Jones, p. 48.
- 34) Beer, I, p. 149.
- 35) Cf. Whalley's remark, 'Coleridge enshrined in "The Ancient Mariner" the quintessence of himself, of his suffering and dread, his sense of sin, his remorse, his powerlessness' (in Jones, p. 162). Other examples of such an approach are found in Berkoben, esp. pp. 83-84 and Yarlott, esp. pp. 168-175.
- 36) See Watson, pp. 90-94.
- 37) The interpretation presented in this chapter is based on the original 1798 version, for chronological reasons. For reasons of clarity and availability, however, the later version as printed in *CP* will be quoted, unless there is a significant 1798 variant.

38) Cf. Pater's statement, 'The spectral object, so crude, so impossible, has become plausible ... and is understood to be but a condition of one's own mind, for which ... the so-called real things themselves are but *spectra* after all' (in Jones, p. 107).

39) *CN*, I, 174; January 1796.

40) *CP*, I, p. 285. An illuminating analysis of different "ways of seeing" is found in Barfield, 2.

41) Magnuson, p. 56.

42) *CP*, I, p. 354; October 16, 1797.

43) In May 1830 Coleridge seems to comment on 'The Ancient Mariner' when he states that the supernatural should be 'true to Nature' — i.e. when the Poet of his own free will and judgement does what the Believing Narrator of a Supernatural Incident, Apparition or Charm does from ignorance and weakness of mind — i.e. mistake a *Subjective* product (A saw the Ghost of Z) for an objective fact — the Ghost of Z was there to be seen', and he adds, 'The Poet must always be in perfect sympathy with the Subject of the Narrative, and tell his tale with "a most believing mind"; but the Tale will be then most impressive for all when it is so constructed and particularized with such [traits?] and circumstances, that the Psychologist and thinking Naturalist shall be furnished with the Means of explaining it as a possible fact, by distinguishing and assigning the *Subjective* portion to its true power' (in *IS*, p. 151; quoted in Magnuson, p. 51).

44) Beer, in Brett, p. 72.

45) Beer, 1, p. 153.

46) Beer, in Brett, p. 72.

47) Brisman, p. 38; cf. Leigh Hunt, 'This is a lesson to those who see nothing in the world but their own unfeeling common-places, and are afterwards visited with a dreary sense of their insufficiency' (in Jones, p. 82).

48) 'Religious Musings', ll. 94-104; quoted in chapter III of this study.

49) *L*, p. 90.

50) Wilson Knight, p. 85.

51) Bate, p. 58.

52) This image was regarded as reprehensible by a contemporaneous critic, which suggests that Coleridge did not use the image fortuitously; cf. Jackson, p. 58.

53) *CP*, II, pp. 586-587.

54) It is impossible to deduce much from Coleridge's use of capitals since this seems usually rather accidental. Still, it may be significant that in the 1798 version 'cross' (l. 141) was capitalized.

55) Mellor, p. 139.

56) Cf. Yarlott, p. 162, 'Part III ends with the forcible reminder that responsibility for the death of his fellows, as well as for that of the Albatross, rests primarily on him'.

57) Bloom, p. 205.

58) Mellor, p. 140.

59) The resurrection of the crew presents a difficulty of interpretation for those critics who accept the mariner's tale at its face value; cf. Warren, p. 245, 'the behavior of the reinspired bodies, taken in itself, offers a difficulty. Taken at the natural level, the manipulating of the sails

and ropes serves no purpose. Taken at the symbolic level, this activity is activity without content, a "lag" in the poem, a "meaningless marvel".

60) Magnuson, p. 78.

61) House, p. 96.

62) Watson, p. 95.

63) Adair, p. 75.

64) Beer, 2, p. 182; cf. Stallknecht, pp. 146-147, 'if the lines are to stand by themselves as the full moral sentiment attached to the poem, they can be no more than a superstitious sailor's comment on his own miraculous adventures, a natural comment and one quite in keeping with the poem as a whole and surely not to be regretted by the author'.

65) Berkeley, II, p. 109; *Principles*, section 148.

66) *Ibid.*, p. 109; *Principles*, section 149.

67) *Ibid.*, p. 81; *Principles*, section 93.

68) *Ibid.*, p. 26; *Principles*, section 3.

69) *Ibid.*, p. 26; *Principles*, section 3.

70) *Ibid.*, p. 79; *Principles*, section 88.

71) *Ibid.*, p. 213; *Dialogues*.

72) *Ibid.*, p. 53; *Principles*, section 30.

73) *Ibid.*, p. 53; *Principles*, section 29.

74) *Ibid.*, p. 262; *Dialogues*.

75) Berkeley, V, pp. 136-137; *Siris*, section 294.

76) *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155; *Siris*, section 339-341.

77) *CL*, I, p. 397; March 10, 1798.

78) Berkeley, V, p. 160; *Siris*, section 356.

79) In Jones, p. 190.

80) The poem is printed in Wordsworth, II, pp. 331-382. Wordsworth, II, pp. 331-382. The textual history of the poem is quite complicated: there are six manuscript versions extant which antedate its first published version (1819). Comparison of these versions shows that Wordsworth extensively emended and considerably shortened the poem in the course of time. Although in places this involves a significant change in the poem's meaning (cf. ll. 766-770), it appears that on the whole Wordsworth remained faithful to its original intention. Since the definitive version is more succinct and often clearer than the preceding versions, I have chosen to concentrate on it for the very cursory outline of the poem required here, in the conviction that this procedure does not distort the evidence of Wordsworth's initial reaction to 'The Ancient Mariner'.

81) Ms. 6, *ibid.*, p. 350.

82) Ms. 2, *ibid.*, p. 353.

83) Cf. 'The Ancient Mariner', ll. 144, 146.

CHAPTER VI

1) Parker, p. 127.

2) Everest, p. 268.

3) Schulz, p. 94.

4) Cf. Everest, p. 260, 'This is like the calm in *The Ancient Mariner*; there is the sense that Coleridge is foreign in his environment, that he has no place in it'. Since the poet subsequently indulges in a brief spell of superstitious projecting on nature, comparable to the mariner's on the albatross, the comparison with the mariner's situation on the South Pole seems a little more appropriate.

5) Cowper, *The Task*, IV, ll. 286-296, esp. ll. 292-294.

6) Magnuson, p. 34; cf. Eldridge, p. 223, 'Nature's works do not speak to him, but are instead again secret, silent, and quiet. The wind, in its silence, entrances itself, and does not carry the poet away with it; he feels himself once again to be left behind'. Eldridge also regards Coleridge's recollections of his youth as an attempt to uncover the cause of his dejection, see esp. pp. 221-223.

7) I, ll. 394-395.

8) This aspect of the first version of *The Prelude* is discussed in Beer's article, 'Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Vital and the Organic', in Crawford, esp. pp. 174-181. The phrases quoted in the text have been taken from Beer's quotations.

9) Most clearly in connection with the nightingale, which was called melancholy by 'some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced/ With the remembrance of a grievous wrong./ ... / (And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself' (ll. 16-19), while the poet who "surrenders his whole spirit to the influxes of nature" (cf. ll. 27-29) knows that the nightingale, as all of nature, is essentially joyful and merry. Also in this poem, then, the projective attitude leads to a failure to benefit from nature's ministry, while the passively receptive attitude is held up as the norm.

10) Cf. Coleridge's later comment on the poem in the Preface where he states that the poem affords 'a striking proof of the possible effect on the imagination, from an idea violently and suddenly impressed on it', so that it illustrates 'the mode in which the mind is affected in these cases, and the progress and symptoms of the morbid action on the fancy from the beginning' (CP, p. 269).

11) 'Religious Musings', ll. 149-152.

CHAPTER VII

1) CL, IV, 775; to Tulk, September, 1817.

2) Coleridge's alleged intimacy with the early Neoplatonists on which his claims are largely based, seems to be confirmed by Lamb's description of the early years spent in Christ's Hospital (Lamb, p. 250). Yet Orsini states that 'this description was not Lamb's spontaneous and unaided recollection, but was supplied by Coleridge himself' (Orsini, p. 9).

3) Cf. BL, I, pp. 160-164; CN, II, 2375; a critical discussion of Coleridge's claims is found in McFarland, pp. 39ff.

4) Orsini, p. 4.

5) Tatarkiewicz, I, p. 322.

6) Deschamps, p. 374.

7) In this passage Mill compares in a lucid and succinct manner the prevailing eighteenth century attitude in England with the, as he calls it, "Germano-Coleridgean doctrine" which Coleridge developed later in his life, 'Every consistent scheme of philosophy requires as its starting point, a theory respecting the sources of human knowledge, and the objects which the human faculties are capable of taking cognizance of. The prevailing theory in the eighteenth century, on this most comprehensive of questions, was that proclaimed by Locke, and commonly attributed to Aristotle — that all knowledge consists of generalizations from experience. Of nature, or anything whatever external to ourselves, we know, according to this theory, nothing, except the facts which present themselves to our senses, and such other facts as may, by analogy, be inferred from these. There is no knowledge *à priori*; no truths cognizable by the mind's inward light, and grounded on intuitive evidence. Sensation, and the mind's consciousness of its own acts, are not only the exclusive sources, but the sole materials of our knowledge. From this doctrine, Coleridge, with the German philosophers since Kant (not to go farther back) and most of the English since Reid, strongly dissents. He claims for the human mind a capacity, within certain limits, of perceiving the nature and properties of "Things in themselves". He distinguishes in the human intellect two faculties, which, in the technical language common to him and the Germans, he calls Understanding and Reason. The former faculty judges of phenomena, or the appearances of things, and forms generalizations from these: to the latter it belongs, by direct intuition, to perceive things, and recognize truths, not cognizable by our senses. These perceptions are not indeed innate, nor could ever have been awakened in us without experience; but they are not copies of it: experience is not their prototype, it is only the occasion by which they are irresistibly suggested. ... Among the truths which are thus known *à priori*, by occasion of experience, Coleridge includes the fundamental doctrines of religion and morals, the principles of mathematics, and the ultimate laws even of physical nature' (Mill, pp. 109-110).

8) See *CL*, I, p. 590; June 7, 1800 and *CL*, II, p. 676; February 13, 1801. There is also a note referring to Christian Wolff, *CN*, I, 905; January/ February, 1801. There are a few notebook entries which might indicate a direct or indirect acquaintance with Leibnitz, e.g. 'O God! when I now think how perishable Things, how imperishable Ideas — what a proof of My Immortality' (*CN*, I, 576). This connection between mind and immortality is characteristic of Leibnitz, though the idea as Coleridge phrases it is too general to be conclusive. For a more general account of Leibnitz' influence, esp. with regard to the concept of organic unity, see Benzinger.

9) *CL*, II, p. 678; February 18, 1801.

10) This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter; *CL*, II, pp. 678-703 for Coleridge's attitude to Locke; a rejection of passivity in *CL*, II, p. 709.

11) Leibnitz, p. 111.

12) *Ibid.*, p. 82; cf. p. 470, 'for the experiences of the senses do not give truths absolutely certain ... , nor are they exempt from all danger of illusion'.

13) *Ibid.*, p. 129; cf. pp. 15-16, 'not only our ideas, but also our sensations, spring from within our own soul'.

14) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22, 'the primitive truths ... do not come at all from the senses or from experience, and cannot be perfectly proved, but from the natural internal light, and this is what I mean in saying that they are innate'.

15) *Ibid.*, p. 72, the idea of God 'does not cease to be in the depths of our souls, without being put there ... and the eternal laws of God are in part engraved thereon in a manner still more legible and by a species of instinct'.

16) *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

17) *Ibid.*, p. 109; cf. p. 119, 'I distinguish only between ideas and thoughts: for we always have all pure and distinct ideas independently of the senses; but thoughts always correspond to some sensation'.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 163.

19) *Ibid.*, p. 111.

20) *Ibid.*, p. 94.

21) *Ibid.*, p. 81.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 719.

23) *Ibid.*, p. 25.

24) In Natan, p. 27.

25) Schlegel, p. 111.

26) *Ibid.*, p. 193.

27) On September 30, 1799 Coleridge affirms to be 'sunk in Spinoza' (*CL*, I, p. 534). On June 7, 1800, however, he speaks only of his intention to read Spinoza (*CL*, I, p. 590). The "Spy Nozy" incident related in the *BL* is the only evidence of an acquaintance with Spinoza prior to the German trip, and as such probably to be discounted, see e.g. Deschamps, p. 430. On the importance of Spinoza to Coleridge and German thought, see McFarland, esp. pp. 83-108.

28) See, e.g., *CL*, I, pp. 519, 623.

29) For a detailed analysis of Spinoza's influence on Lessing, see v. Stockum.

30) Cf. de Deugd, 2, *passim*, esp. pp. 74-75.

31) Schlegel, p. 196.

32) *Ibid.*, p. 166.

33) *Ethics*, II, prop. 47.

34) *Ibid.*, V, prop. 36.

35) *Ibid.*, V, prop. 27.

36) *Ibid.*, V, prop. 33.

37) De Deugd, 2, pp. 158-178, 207-209.

38) Leibnitz, p. 99.

39) Schlegel, p. 166.

40) Orsini, p. 153.

41) Willey, 3, p. 89; cf. Orsini's statement that 'Kant rejects for good the empiricist doctrine of passivity of mind, the mind as a blank sheet upon which something outside it impresses its data', because 'there are factors in our mind which cannot be accounted for by experience, so they must be generated by the mind itself' (Orsini, p. 76).

42) Quoted in Orsini, p. 71.

43) In Natan, p. 76.

44) Lovejoy argues that in Kantian philosophy the mind's activity in perception is wholly predetermined and does not imply freedom, from which he concludes, 'So far from regarding the sensationalist's assumption of the passivity of the mind as too deterministic, his objection to it was that it was not deterministic enough', and 'Thus the effect of the Kantian arguments for the "activity of the mind" should have been to confirm Coleridge in his necessitarianism — by providing him with a new and better proof of it than could be got from Hartley or Priestley' (Lovejoy, pp. 343-344). I am not competent to determine the validity of Lovejoy's interpretation of Kant, but his conclusions with regard to Coleridge do not seem justified. As has been argued, Hartley's necessitarianism was held by Coleridge in conjunction with the belief in the divine power of nature; passively receiving nature's influxes was to him almost equivalent to receiving divine revelation. In Kant's epistemology this would certainly be inconceivable: from his point of view the external, "noumenal" world may be divine, but man can never know this. Man can only know the world he perceives, the phenomenal world which results from a combination of sense and mind. Claiming that this phenomenal world is divine would be similar to stating that in some way or other the human mind is divine, and this would mean the overthrow of all empiricism. Consequently, it is not true that Kant "should" have confirmed Coleridge in his (Hartleyan) empiricism.

45) Quoted in Warnock, p. 28 (from Kemp Smith's translation). The dots indicate my omission of the word 'therefore' which makes the statement unnecessarily obscure. In German the sentence reads, 'Weil aber jede Erscheinung ein Mannigfaltiges enthält, mithin verschiedene Wahrnehmungen im Gemüthe an sich zerstreuet und einzeln angetroffen werden, so ist eine Verbindung derselben nöthig, welche sie in dem Sinne selbst nicht haben können' (Kant, IV, p. 89).

46) Quoted in Warnock, p. 59.

47) Quoted in Warnock, p. 59.

48) Warnock, p. 61; my account of this aspect of Kant's imagination is based on chapter II of her study.

49) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 62.

50) It is unlikely that Coleridge read Schelling at this stage. Since he may have been indirectly aware of Schelling, however, it could be significant that Schelling tends to reject the restrictions Kant imposes on the imagination. The basic difference between Kant and Schelling is that whereas in Kant the imagination is primarily a representative faculty, revealing to the mind what lies beyond it, whether the *Ding-an-sich* or the ideas of Reason, and is only creative in the sense that it forms *images* of things or ideas already existing — which obviously implies a grand restriction on the creativeness of the imagination: it is not free, but strives towards something already there — in Schelling the imagination is truly creative: it does not merely represent, but create, for instance, the external world which does not have an objective existence independently of it. A consideration of the extent to which the imagination can be said to be creative, and the extent to which all human creation is rooted in empiricism is found in de Deugd, 3, where it is argued that the romantic conception of the imagination entails an overestimation of the degree to which man can emancipate himself from, or transcend, the world of sense.

51) I have deliberately paid no attention to the role pantheism plays in continental thought. Not only because it is a complicated issue which would require a much more detailed analysis, but also because it was apparently not until much later that Coleridge became expressly concerned with it. Some relevant ideas can be found in McFarland, *passim*.

52) *CL*, I, p. 209; May 5, 1796.

53) It may be noted, for instance, that Friedrich Schlegel, independently of Schiller, developed a theory of "objective" and "interesting" poetry which bears a marked resemblance to Schiller's categories of "naive" and "sentimental"; for a discussion of the relation between Schlegel and Schiller, see Mennemeyer, pp. 108-116.

54) 'The Homeric Hexameter' and 'The Ovidian Elegiac Meter' (Schiller); 'Catullian Hendecasyllables' (Matthisson).

55) Wellek, 1, I, p. 252.

56) Wells, p. 492.

57) Schiller, VIII, p. 262.

58) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 256, 'In dieser Epoche ist ihm die Welt bloss Schicksal, noch nicht Gegenstand; alles hat nur Existenz für ihn, insofern es ihm Existenz verschafft; was ihm weder gibt noch nimmt, ist ihm gar nicht vorhanden'.

59) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 258, 'Auf den Flügeln der Einbildungskraft verlässt der Mensch die engen Schranken der Gegenwart, in welche die blosse Tierheit sich einschliesst, um vorwärts nach einer unbeschränkten Zukunft zu streben'.

60) *Ibid.*, p. 257.

61) He admits that 'Der Mensch ... war nie ganz in diesem tierischen Zustand' (*ibid.*, p. 257).

62) *Ibid.*, p. 263.

63) *Ibid.*, p. 263.

64) The implications of this become clear when Schiller makes the following statement about beauty, 'Die Schönheit ist also zwar Gegenstand für uns, weil die Reflexion die Bedingung ist, unter der wir eine Empfindung von ihr haben, zugleich aber ist sie ein Zustand unsers Subjekts, weil das Gefühl die Bedingung ist, unter der wir eine Vorstellung von ihr haben. Sie ist also zwar Form, weil wir sie betrachten, zugleich aber ist sie Leben, weil wir sie fühlen. Mit einem Wort: sie ist zugleich unser Zustand [because the nature man perceives arouses feelings in his mind] und unsre That [since external nature is a reflection of man's state of mind]' (*ibid.*, p. 265).

65) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 325, 'Solange wir blosse Naturkinder waren, waren wir glücklich und vollkommen; wir sind frei geworden und haben beides verloren'.

66) *Ibid.*, p. 331.

67) *Ibid.*, p. 335.

68) *Ibid.*, p. 312.

69) Schiller, however, regards this ideal as unattainable, 'Weil aber das Ideal ein Unendliches ist, das er niemals erreicht, so kann der kultivierte Mensch in *seiner* Art niemals vollkommen werden' (*ibid.*, p. 337). As Schiller's idea of man's striving for the ideal bears some resemblance to the Kantian idea of the imagination endeavouring to approach the ideas of Reason, so also here a parallel is found in that also Kant held that the artistic imagination can never reach the ideas of Reason.

70) *Ibid.*, p. 378.

71) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 335, 'Auch jetzt ist die Natur noch die einzige Flamme, an der sich der Dichtergeist nähret'.

72) *Ibid.*, p. 353.

73) *Ibid.*, p. 326.

74) Coleridge translated some smaller poems and epigrams of Lessing, Goethe, Tieck, Matthiessen, and Schiller (see Fruman, pp. 29-33). He used poems of Frederica Brun (for 'Hymn before Sunrise') and Solomon Gessner (for 'The Picture'; cf. *CL*, II, p. 864). In his letters he refers to Bürger's 'Lenore' (*CL*, I, p. 438) and to Voss' poems (*CL*, II, p. 834). All these poems are of little significance to this study. There are translations of the following poems of Stolberg in *CP*, 'The British Stripling's War-Song', 'The Wills of the Wisp', 'Hymn to the Earth', and 'On a Cataract'.

75) Coleridge's translation of these lines is as follows, 'Into my being thou murmurest joy, and tenderest sadness/ Shedd'st thou, like dew, on my heart, till the joy and the heavenly sadness/ Pour themselves forth from my heart in tears, and the hymn of thanksgiving'.

76) Goethe, XII, p. 31; in 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil' (1788).

CHAPTER VIII

1) Prickett, I, p. 29.

2) *CL*, II, pp. 671-672; February 3, 1801.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 682; to Josiah Wedgwood, February 1800.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 678.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 678.

6) *Ibid.*, pp. 685-686.

7) Locke, pp. 89-90; *Essay*, II, I, 2-4.

8) cf. Gay, pp. 11-12, 'The propagandists of the Enlightenment were French, but its patron saints and pioneers were British: Bacon, Newton, and Locke had such splendid reputations on the Continent that they quite overshadowed the revolutionary ideas of a Descartes or a Fontanelle, and it became not only tactically useful but intellectually respectable in eighteenth-century France to attribute to British savants ideas they may well have learned from Frenchmen'.

9) Cf. Descartes, chapter 4.

10) *CL*, II, pp. 688-689.

11) *Ibid.*, p. 686.

12) Plato suffers a similar treatment in these letters; cf. *CL*, II, p. 682, 'By *Ideas* Plato, notwithstanding his fantastic expressions respecting them, meant what Mr Locke calls the original Faculties & Tendencies of the mind, the internal Organs, as it were, and *Laws* of human Thinking'. Comparing Locke's and Plato's notions of ideas, Westendorp Boerma concludes that they are the opposite of each other, Locke's 'ideas are tied to the object, to the earth, they *emerge* in sensation through the impression of things; they are not eternal, unchangeable, the one fades and disappears, another not existing before begins to appear. The object is not the weak shadow of the idea; the idea is the reflection of the thing' (in v. Oyen, II, p. 82; my translation).

13) *CL*, II, p. 689.

14) *Ibid.*, p. 699.

15) Orsini, p. 48.

16) Going one step further, one could even maintain that also Coleridge's own statements are often inconclusive and potentially misleading. In these letters Coleridge expresses his own attitude to innate ideas as follows, 'I was likewise tempted to remark that I do not think the Doctrine of innate Ideas even in Mr Locke's sense of the Word utterly absurd & ridiculous, as Aristotle, Des Cartes, & Mr Locke have concurred in representing it. When if instead of innate Ideas a philosopher had asserted the existence of *constituent* Ideas' (*ibid.*, p. 696). Since it is impossible to tell what is meant by "innate ideas" in this fragment, no valid inference regarding Coleridge's position can be drawn from it. In this case, the wording of the statement provides a sufficient check not to put too much emphasis on it, but this need not always be the case, especially not when presented in the shorthand notation of the notebooks.

17) Cf. notes 9 and 28 of chapter VII.

18) *CL*, II, p. 864; to Sotheby, September 10, 1802.

19) *Ibid.*, pp. 865-866.

20) *CN*, I, 789; August 26/27, 1800.

21) *Ibid.*, 866.

22) *Ibid.*, 905.

23) *Ibid.*, 918.

24) *CL*, II, p. 709; March 23, 1801.

25) This appears from the reference to 'we' in the next phrase.

26) *CN*, I, 556.

27) *CL*, I, p. 590; June 7, 1800.

28) *CL*, II, p. 866.

29) *CN*, I, 1379.

30) *CL*, II, p. 893.

31) Cf. *CN*, I, 922, 'As we recede from anthropomorphism we must either go to the Trinity or to Pantheism — The Fathers who were Unitarians, were Anthropomorphites'.

32) *CN*, I, 1369; translated by C. Schwarz; the original is in Latin.

33) *Ibid.*, 921.

34) *CL*, II, p. 961; August 7, 1803.

35) Cf. the famous 'one Life' passage in 'The Eolian Harp' where the 'one Life' is described as the 'soul' of all motion both in light and sound (sensation) and in all thought (reflection).

36) *CL*, II, p. 916; January 14, 1803.

37) One aspect of Coleridge's position requires further attention. Coleridge does not assert that "feeling" emanates from, but that it *is*, the divine basis of unity and life. It would have been much clearer if Coleridge had called the principle of unity God, and the principle of life emanating from God "feeling". That he does not do so is probably connected with his rather special form of unitarianism, the outline of which may be deduced from his notebook comment on John Scotus

Erigena, 'a curious & highly philosophical account of the Trinity, & compleatly Unitarian — God is, is wise, & is living. The Essence we call Father, the Wisdom Son, the Life the Holy Spirit — and he positively affirms that these three exist only as distinguishable *Relations* — *habitudines* —' (CN, I, 1382). This trinitarian unitarianism, if it may be so called, could explain the rather puzzling equation of God and "feeling": the Father is the divine ground of unity and life, the essence beyond ideas, and the Holy Spirit is the "feeling" by means of which the Father reveals himself and works in the world of ideas. Since the Father and the Holy Spirit are wholly and truly one, however, the essence beyond ideas, and the life in ideas are one and the same, which means that God and "the state of feeling" are interchangeable terms.

38) CN, I, 1561.

39) CL, II, p. 916; January 14, 1803.

40) Cf. the section on Spinoza in chapter VII of this study.

41) Cf. *Ethics*, V, prop. 36.

42) Abrams, 2, p. 152.

43) See the section on Akenside in chapter I of this study.

44) See the Introduction to this study.

45) Willey, 2, p. 43.

46) Abrams, 2, p. 148.

47) CL, II, p. 864; cf. *ibid.*, p. 842 where he describes his experience on Sca'fell, 'the sight of the Craggs above me on each side, & the impetuous Clouds just over them, posting so luridly & so rapidly northward, overawed me / I lay in a state of almost prophetic Trance & Delight — & blessed God aloud, for the powers of Reason & the Will, which remaining no Danger can overpower us'; cf. *Paradise Lost*, III, ll. 107-111, where God speaks, 'What pleasure I from such obedience paid, / When will and reason (reason also is choice) / Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled, / Made passive both, had served necessity, / Not me'. The lines quoted from 'Hymn before Sunrise' are based on the following notebook entry, 'Poems — Ghost of a mountain/ the forms seizing my body, as I passed, became realities — I, a Ghost, till I had reconquered my Substance' (CN, I, 1241).

48) As is well-known the poem 'is an expansion, in part, of a translation of Friederika Brun's "Ode to Chamouny" ... which numbers some twenty lines' (CP, p. 376n). Milton may also be echoed here, cf. *Paradise Lost*, V, ll. 185-196. Berkoben remarks that 'in 1802 his feeling about nature had become so divided that his own experience could not provide satisfactory material for a poem in praise of God' (Berkoben, p. 57).

49) Coleridge does at times refer to the imagination, but it seems exclusively in connection with the writing of poetry; its relation to "feeling" is not clear; cf. CL, II, p. 866 and p. 714, 'Dejection: an Ode', l. 86.

50) Wordsworth, II, p. 389.

51) *Ibid.*, p. 393.

52) Willey, 1, p. 268; the question of a possible continental influence on Wordsworth, during or after his trip to Germany, cannot be discussed here.

CHAPTER IX

1) The inferior quality of the verse of the biographical sections is recognized by most critics; as Yarlott states, 'Immediately this personal matter intrudes in the original version of the poem [he refers to the verse letter] there is a dislocation of the earlier urbanity: detachment crumbles, taut control gives way to rambling discursiveness, and the confident rhythms of the earlier meditative stanzas are broken by weak repetitions and lax parentheses' (Yarlott, p. 251). This uneven quality of the verse, Dekker argues, can only mean that the better, not directly personal sections of the verse letter were already in existence by the time Coleridge wrote the verse letter since otherwise 'we have to explain how it was that during the evening of 4 April 1802 Coleridge was, for fifty lines here and sixty lines there, one of the greatest and most polished poets in the language, and, for stretches of a hundred or seventy lines at a time, no better than a clumsy off-the-top-of-the-head versifier' (Dekker, p. 48). In chapter 1 of his study Dekker also considers the circumstantial evidence in detail.

2) The various versions of the ode are printed and discussed in an appendix to Dekker's study, pp. 247-264.

3) In 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' the passage describing alienation takes about 5 lines; in 'Frost at Midnight' about 23 lines; in 'Dejection: an Ode' about 38 lines. The increasing length of these sections is almost symbolic of Coleridge's development.

4) Parker, p. 185.

5) That this is done on the basis of the sailor's superstitious belief as voiced in the 'Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence' indicates that in the ode, as in 'The Ancient Mariner', superstition plays a role in the protagonist's alienation from nature; cf. Parker, pp. 183-184.

6) Cf. Dekker, p. 75, who also notes that Coleridge quotes these lines in a letter of early April 1797; *CL*, I, p. 320.

7) Cf. Willey, 3, p. 94, who states that in these lines 'you have not a projection of the poet's soul into a dead Nature, giving it a semblance of life, but a genuine marriage between two living beings — the poet and Nature — resulting in a new creation which partakes of the life of both'; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 198. Lovejoy, pp. 347-349 argues against reading a Kantian, "transcendental" idealism into these lines.

8) Deschamps, p. 397.

9) Suther, p. 136.

10) Stallknecht, p. 167.

11) Bloom, p. 216.

12) Dekker, p. 243.

13) Dekker, *passim*, discusses the influence of *Werther* on the early Coleridge. In connection with the ode, he quotes at length from an inaccurate early translation, cf. esp. pp. 95-97.

14) Goethe, VI, pp. 84-85.

15) The main point is that there is a great ideational and perhaps also circumstantial resemblance between the poet's situation in the ode and *Werther's*, so that a consideration of *Werther* enriches the ode's meaning by giving a greater depth and significance to the poet's plight; cf. Dekker, p. 95, 'the resemblances between the two works are so striking that we must pause to consider

whether *Dejection* is not perhaps the most distinguished English contribution to Wertheriana'.

16) Goethe, VI, p. 84.

17) *Ibid.*, p. 85.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 84.

19) The following observations are indebted to van Ingen, pp. 18-35,

20) Cf. van Ingen, pp. 29-30, 'As Werther in his first letter saw nature with the eyes of Homer, so he sees it, as his tragic end approaches, with those of Ossian. With the eyes of Homer and Ossian — it seems like a play on words since both were blind according to tradition. But it is more: Werther's view of nature is that of one blind to reality' (my translation).

21) Dekker, p. 238.

22) Cf. Parker, p. 196.

23) The Miltonic echoes in these lines are many. Besides the rather oblique reference to the beginning of 'L'Allegro', 'Hence, loathed Melancholy', the snake image seems clearly derived from Milton. Samson describes his fall as being due to his becoming 'Entangled with a poisonous bosom snake' (*Samson Agonistes*, l. 763). More generally, the line recalls Satan sitting 'like a toad, close at the ear of Eve' trying to instil into her 'Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams' (*Paradise Lost*, IV, ll. 800, 803); cf. also *Paradise Lost*, IX, ll. 171-184, where it is described how the Devil enters the snake. In *Paradise Regained*, IV, ll. 407-409, a similar passage is found, 'at his head/ The Tempter watched, and soon with ugly dreams/ Disturbed his sleep'. Milton's frequent reference to 'dreams' in this connection may have contributed to the phrase 'Reality's dark dream'.

24) Quoted in Abrams, 2, p. 148; from *Enneads*, IV, VIII, 4.

25) In the early versions of the ode the lines read 'O wherefore did I let it haunt my mind,/ This dark distressful dream?'. Since it is on these lines that a radical change in the ode hinges, Coleridge may have considered them too thin and weak to carry this burden. Yet it is doubtful whether his later alteration of the line is a significant improvement.

26) Cf. Heath, pp. 97-98, who notes that 'The poet is no longer in the passive state of the windharp' and that 'order is gained by making a metaphor that merges the internal self with something perceived in the external world'.

27) In the description of the wind's activity, a reference to the dream with which Satan plagues Christ in *Paradise Regained*, IV, ll. 413-425, may be implied.

28) Schiller, II, p. 128.

29) Schulz, p. 204; similar remarks are made by e.g. Bate, p. 109, and Yarlott, p. 263.

30) Fogle, p. 58; he adds that 'The reconciliation achieved in the *Ode* is relative, not absolute' (p. 59).

31) Abrams in Abrams, 3, p. 39; cf. also Parker, p. 207 who argues that the poet's mind 'is winning its way to a substantial calm'.

32) Dekker, p. 150.

CHAPTER X

1) Schneider, p. 22.

2) *CN*, I, 1281 (November, 1802), 'Kublaikhan ordered letters to be invented for his people —'; *CN*, I, 1840 (January, 1804), 'Cublai Chan began to reign, 1256 the greatest Prince in Peoples, Cities, & Kingdoms that ever was in the World'.

3) Cf. Fruman, *passim*, esp. pp. 33, 78. He argues that 'One can detect a rather clear pattern emerging in the *Biographia Literaria*: Coleridge will cite repeatedly, discuss intellectual obligations again and again, express severe contempt of imitators and plagiarists — and, during crucial passages of speculation or learning derived from little-known writers, suppress the source' (Fruman, p. 78).

4) A major difference is that Milton presents a true paradise, while Purchas' paradise is a false one. Since in the final part the poet laments his inability to recreate Kubla's paradise in verse, one can only conclude that it is to be regarded as a true, though limited and finite paradise. This would suggest Milton's precedence over Purchas in the conception of the poem; cf. Magnuson, p. VII, 'The dome is either the sensual earthly paradise of an Oriental tyrant or Milton's Eden, depending on whether one prefers Purchas or *Paradise Lost*'.

5) Kubla is found in *Paradise Lost* (hereafter *PL*), XI, ll. 387-388. Other elements that could have been encountered in *PL*: fertile ground and incense bearing trees, cf. *PL*, IV, ll. 147-149, 216-217, 248; incense is found in IX, l. 194 and XI, ll. 18, 25; the underground river, cf. IV, ll. 223-225 and IX, ll. 71-73, in both instances this underground river emerges in a fountain; fountain, rills, and chasm are all found in IV, ll. 229-241; chasm, illimitable ocean of Night and Chaos, and war are found in II, ll. 891-897, 910; cf. VII, ll. 233-234 and XII, ll. 555-556; caves in IV, ll. 257-258; Abyssinia and Mount Amara in IV, ll. 280-281. It should be added that a host of other sources of 'Kubla Khan' have been proposed, which is not surprising since, as Fruman notes, 'Paradises in literature ... tend to be boringly similar' (p. 344). Since there are so many corresponding images, however, and since Coleridge's acquaintance with *PL* is not in doubt, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he at least drew upon his memories of *PL*. Nevertheless Fruman is right when he implies that *PL*, or any other literary paradise, should not determine, or even influence, one's interpretation of 'Kubla Khan' since the corresponding imagery is too stereotyped to serve as more than a poetic background (cf. Fruman, p. 344).

6) Baker, p. 180; cf. Bostetter, p. 87, 'The sacred river suggests the river of life arising from the ebullient fountain of creation, sinking into the sunless sea of death'.

7) Cf. Hough, p. 65, 'Alph, the sacred river is surely the river of the Muses, the poetic imagination itself, which is terrible as well as seductive, and threatened ultimately with conflict and extinction, as Coleridge later was too bitterly to know'; Fogle, p. 48, states that 'The river is human life, past, present, and future, birth, life, and death'.

8) Quoted in Abrams, 2, p. 148 from *Enneads*, VI, XI, 9; cf. *ibid.*, p. 152, 'the Neoplatonic circle of emanation and return manifested itself most widely in the concept of *circuitus spiritualis*, a powerful current of "love", or cohesive and sustaining supernatural energy, which flows ceaselessly from God down through the successive levels of ever remoter being and circles back to God — the force that holds the universe together and manifests itself to human awareness as the yearning to return to an undivided state'.

9) *CN*, I, 1840.

10) Magnuson, p. 42; cf. Carlyle, IV, p. 4, 'In our inward, as in our outward world, what is mechanical lies open to us: not what is dynamical and has vitality. Of our Thinking, we might say, it is but the mere upper surface that we shape into articulate Thoughts; — underneath the region of argument and conscious discourse, lies the region of meditation; here in its quiet mysterious depths, dwells what vital force is in us; here, if aught is to be created, and not merely manufactured and communicated, must the work go on' (from 'Characteristics'). Carlyle's remarks curiously resemble Coleridge's position in 'Kubla Khan', suggesting, at least, a similar background in continental thought.

11) Beer, I, p. 233; cf. Bostetter, p. 87, 'a perfect balance or reconciliation ... is achieved of the primitive and the civilized, the unconscious and the conscious, the elemental passions and the rational mind, nature and art'.

12) Fruman, p. 398.

13) Schneider, p. 243.

CHAPTER XI

1) Teichman, p. 983. A discussion of 'Resolution and Independence' in the light of 'Dejection: an Ode' is found in his essay, where also further references are supplied (see esp. p. 988 note 1).

2) Wordsworth, II, pp. 235-240.

3) 'Resolution and Independence' was begun on May 3, 1802, while 'The Picture' was probably written in August 1802.

4) The only discussion of some length that I am aware of is the one presented by Kelly. Brief discussions of the poem are found in Suther, pp. 52-54; Adair, pp. 194-196; Schulz, pp. 137-139; Wilson Knight, pp. 116-117.

5) Schulz, p. 22.

6) Whalley, 2, p. 129.

7) Adair, p. 196.

8) Mellor, p. 5.

9) Gessner, p. 105.

10) *Ibid.*, p. 106.

11) I will indicate the major correspondences between the two. First Gessner's phrases are quoted, followed by the corresponding lines in 'The Picture'. 'Die röhlichten Stämme der Fichten, und die schlanken Stämme der Eichen steigen aus wildem Gebüsche hervor, und tragen ein trauriges Gewölb über mir' (p. 103) — 'With dun-red bark/ The fir-trees, and the unfrequent slender oak/ ... / Soar up, and form a melancholy vault' (ll. 12-15); 'Hier will ich mich hinsetzen, an den hohlen vermoderten Eichstamm, den ein Nez von Epheu umwickelt; hier will ich mich hinsetzen, wo kein menschlicher Fusstritt noch hingedrungen ist ...' (p. 103) — 'Here will I seat myself, beside this old,/ Hollow, and weedy oak, which ivy-twined/ Clothes as with a network: here will I couch my limbs/ ... / As safe and sacred from the step of man' (ll. 49-54); 'Ich will deinen Wellen folgen, vielleicht fuhrest du mich ödern Gegenden zu' (p. 104) — 'O lead,/ Lead me to deeper shades and lonelier glooms' (ll. 120-121). Kelly, p. 77, implicitly rejects Gessner's

influence.

12) *CN*, I, 1153.

13) There is some uncertainty about the authorship of 'The Mad Monk', cf. Parrish. The debate about the authorship of the poem seems primarily instigated by the lines, ' "There was a time when earth, and sea, and skies,/ The bright green vale, and forest's dark recess,/ With all things, lay before mine eyes/ In steady loveliness' (ll. 9-12). These lines were subsequently echoed in Wordsworth's immortality ode and, again, in Coleridge's dejection ode. Since in 'The Mad Monk' the protagonist adopts a "projective" attitude to nature and he considers suicide as a possible solution, it would seem the more reasonable assumption that Coleridge wrote 'The Mad Monk'; cf. also the lines from 'Pain' quoted in chapter II of this study. The immortality ode would then represent Wordsworth's "answer" to Coleridge's 'The Mad Monk', while the dejection ode could be seen as Coleridge's "reply" to the immortality ode. 'Resolution and Independence' could be regarded as Wordsworth's next contribution to this poetic debate, to which Coleridge, in turn, "answered" in 'The Picture'.

14) Since the different versions of the poem do not differ significantly, I have chosen to refer to its final version as printed in *CP*.

15) This section is not included in any of the earlier versions of the poem. One cannot be certain, however, that these lines were written later, especially since they contain a straightforward reference to suicide. They may also have been suppressed at the time, because Coleridge did not want to worry his friends more than he had already done in the dejection ode, or for some other private reason.

16) Kelly, p. 76.

17) *Ibid.*, p. 92.

18) Suther, p. 54.

19) Cf. 'To William Wordsworth', ll. 61-75.

20) See the introduction to this study.

21) Boulger, p. 200.

22) In the sestet of this sonnet Coleridge states that he will build an altar in nature, but, as Bate points out, this does not indicate any special bond between God and nature, but is rather done 'so that nature will at least *seem* God's temple' (Bate, p. 179).

23) Cf. *CN*, I, 430, 431.

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